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VENETIA BY B. DISRAELI.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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VENETIA.

BY

B. DISRAELI.

AUTHOR OF "TANCRED," &c.

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VENETIA.

VOL. II.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER VII.

Venetia soon found that she must bid adieu for ever, in London, to her old habits of solitude. She soon discovered that she was never to be alone. Her aunt called upon them very early in the morning, and said that the whole day must be devoted to their court dresses; and in a few minutes they were all whirled off to a celebrated milliner's. After innummerable consultations and experiments, the dress of Venetia was decided on; her aunt and Lady Annabel were both assured that it would exceed in splendour and propriety any dress at the drawing-room. Indeed, as the great artist added, with such a model to work from it would reflect but little credit on the establishment, if any approached Miss Herbert in the effect she must inevitably produce.

While her mother was undergoing some of those attentions to which Venetia had recently submitted, and had retired for a few minutes into an adjoining apart-

ment, our little lady of Cherbury strolled about the saloon in which she had been left, until her attention was attracted by a portrait of a young man in an oriental dress, standing very sublimely amid the ruins of some desert city; a palm tree in the distance, and by his side a crouching camel, and some recumbent followers slumbering amid the fallen columns.

"That is Lord Cadurcis, my love," said her aunt, who at the moment joined her, "the famous poet. All the young ladies are in love with him. I dare say you know his works by heart."

"No, indeed, aunt," said Venetia; "I never even read them; but I should like very much."

"Not read Lord Cadurcis' poems! Oh! we must go and get them directly for you. Everybody reads them. You will be looked upon quite as a little barbarian. We will stop the carriage at Stockdale's, and get them for you."

At this moment Lady Annabel rejoined them; and having made all their arrangements, they re-entered the carriage.

"Stop at Stockdale's," said her ladyship to the servant; "I must get Cadurcis' last poem for Venetia. She will be quite back in her learning, Annabel."

"Cadurcis' last poem!" said Lady Annabel; "do you mean Lord Cadurcis? Is he a poet?"

"To be sure! Well, you are countrified not to know Lord Cadurcis!"

"I know him very well," said Lady Annabel, gravely; "but I did not know he was a poet."

The Countess laughed, the carriage stopped, the book was brought; Lady Annabel looked very uneasy, and tried to catch her daughter's countenance, but, strange to say, for the first time in her life was quite unsuccessful. The Countess took the book, and immediately gave it Venetia. "There, my dear," said her aunt, "there never was anything so charming. I am so provoked that Cadurcis is a Whig."

"A Whig!" said Lady Annabel, "he was not a Whig when I knew him."

"Oh! my dear, I am afraid he is worse than a Whig. He is almost a rebel! But then he is such a genius! Everything is allowed, you know, to a genius!" said the thoughtless sister-in-law.

Lady Annabel was silent! but the stillness of her emotion must not be judged from the stillness of her tongue. Her astonishment at all she had heard was only equalled by what we may justly term her horror. It was impossible that she could have listened to any communication at the same time so astounding, and to her so fearful.

"We knew Lord Cadurcis when he was very young, aunt," said Venetia, in a very quiet tone. "He lived near mamma, in the country."

"Oh! my dear Annabel, if you see him in town bring him to me, he is the most difficult person in the world to get to one's house, and I would give anything if he would come and dine with me."

The Countess at last set her relations down at their hotel. When Lady Annabel was once more alone with

her daughter, she said — "Venetia, dearest, give me that book your aunt lent you."

Venetia immediately handed it to her, but her mother did not open it; but saying — "The Bishop dines at four, darling, I think it is time for us to dress," Lady Annabel left the room.

To say the truth, Venetia was less surprised than disappointed by this conduct of her mother's; but she was not apt to murmur, and she tried to dismiss the subject from her thoughts.

It was with unfeigned delight that the kind-hearted Masham welcomed under his own roof his two best and dearest friends. He had asked nobody to meet them; it was settled that they were to be quite alone, and to talk of nothing but Cherbury and Marringhurst. When they were seated at table, the Bishop, who had been detained at the House of Lords, and been rather hurried to be in time to receive his guests, turned to his servant and inquired whether any one had called.

"Yes, my lord, Lord Cadurcis," was the reply.

"Our old companion," said the Bishop to Lady Annabel, with a smile. "He has called upon me twice, and I have on both occasions unfortunately been absent."

Lady Annabel merely bowed an assent to the Bishop's remark. Venetia longed to speak, but found it impossible. "What is it that represses me?" she asked herself. "Is there to be another forbidden subject insensibly to arise between us? I must struggle

against this indefinable despotism that seems to pervade my life."

"Have you met Lord Cadurcis, Sir?" at length asked Venetia.

"Once; we resumed our acquaintance at a dinner party one day; but I shall soon see a great deal of him, for he has just taken his seat. He is of age, you know."

"I hope he has come to years of discretion in every sense," said Lady Annabel, "but I fear not."

"Oh! my dear Lady," said the Bishop, "he has become a great man; he is our star. I assure you there is nobody in London talked of but Lord Cadurcis. He asked me a great deal after you and Cherbury. He will be delighted to see you."

"I cannot say," replied Lady Annabel, "that the desire of meeting is at all mutual. From all I hear, our connections and opinions are very different, and I dare say our habits likewise."

"My aunt lent us his new poem to-day," said Venetia very boldly.

"Have you read it?" asked the Bishop.

"I am no admirer of modern poetry," said Lady Annabel, somewhat tartly.

"Poetry of any kind is not much in my way," said the Bishop, "but if you like to read his poems, I will lend them to you, for he gave me a copy; esteemed a great honour, I assure you."

"Thank you, my Lord," said Lady Annabel, "both Venetia and myself are very much engaged now; and

I do not wish her to read while she is in London. When we return to Cherbury she will have abundance of time, if desirable."

Both Venetia and her worthy host felt that the present subject of conversation was not very agreeable to Lady Annabel, and it was immediately changed. They fell upon more gracious topics, and in spite of this somewhat sullen commencement the meeting was quite as delightful as they anticipated. Lady Annabel particularly exerted herself to please, and, as was invariably the case under such circumstances with this lady, she was eminently successful; she apparently endeavoured, by her remarkable kindness to her daughter, to atone for any unpleasant feeling which her previous manner might for an instant have occasioned. Venetia watched her beautiful and affectionate parent as Lady Annabel now dwelt with delight upon the remembrance of their happy home, and now recurred to the anxiety she naturally felt about her daughter's approaching presentation, with feelings of love and admiration, which made her accuse herself for the recent rebellion of her heart. She thought only of her mother's sorrows, and her devotion to her child; and, grateful for the unexpected course of circumstances which seemed to be leading every member of their former little society to honour and happiness, she resolved to persist in that career of duty and devotion to her mother, from which it seemed to her she had never deviated for a moment but to experience sorrow, misfortune, and remorse. Never did Venetia receive her mother's accustomed embrace and

blessing with more responsive tenderness and gratitude than this night. She banished Cadurcis and his poems from her thoughts, confident that, so long as her mother approved neither of her continuing his acquaintance nor perusing his writings, it was well that the one should be a forgotten tie, and the other a sealed book.

CHAPTER VIII.

Among the intimate acquaintances of Lady Annabel's brother was the nobleman who had been a minister during the American war, and who had also been the guardian of Lord Cadurcis, of whom, indeed, he was likewise a distant relative. He had called with his lady on Lady Annabel, after meeting her and her daughter at her brother's, and had cultivated her acquaintance with great kindness and assiduity, so that Lady Annabel had found it impossible to refuse his invitation to dinner.

This dinner occurred a few days after the visit of the Herberts to the Bishop, and that excellent personage, her own family, and some others equally distinguished, but all of the ministerial party, were invited to meet her. Lady Annabel found herself placed at table between a very pompous courtier, who, being a gourmand, was not very prompt to disturb his enjoyment by conversation, and a young man whom she found very agreeable, and who at first, indeed, attracted her attention by his resemblance to some face with which she felt she was familiar, and yet which

she was not successful in recalling. His manners were remarkably frank and ingenuous, yet soft and refined. Without having any peculiar brilliancy of expression, he was apt and fluent, and his whole demeanour characterized by a gentle modesty that was engaging. Apparently he had travelled a great deal, for he more than once alluded to his experience of foreign countries, but this was afterwards explained by Lady Annabel discovering, from an observation he let fall, that he was a sailor. A passing question from an opposite guest also told her that he was a member of parliament. While she was rather anxiously wishing to know who he might be, and congratulating herself that one in whose favour she was so much prepossessed should be on the right side, their host saluted him from the top of the table, and said, "Captain Cadurcis, a glass of wine."

The countenance was now explained. It was indeed Lord Cadurcis whom he resembled, though his eyes were dark blue, and his hair light brown. This then was that cousin who had been sent to sea to make his fortune, and whom Lady Annabel had a faint recollection of poor Mrs. Cadurcis once mentioning. George Cadurcis had not exactly made his fortune, but he had distinguished himself in his profession, and especially in Rodney's victory, and had fought his way up to the command of a frigate. The frigate had recently been paid off, and he had called to pay his respects to his noble relative with the hope of obtaining his interest for a new command. The guardian of his

cousin, very much mortified with the conduct of his hopeful ward, was not very favourably impressed towards any one who bore the name of Cadurcis, yet George, with no pretence, had a winning honest manner that made friends; his lordship took a fancy to him, and as he could not at the moment obtain him a ship he did the next best thing for him in his power; a borough was vacant, and he put him into parliament.

"Do you know," said Lady Annabel to her neighbour, "I have been fancying all dinner time that we had met before; but I find it is that you only resemble one with whom I was once acquainted."

"My cousin!" said the Captain, "he will be very mortified when I go home, if I tell him your ladyship speaks of his acquaintance as one that is past."

"It is some years since we met," said Lady Annabel, in a more reserved tone.

"Plantagenet can never forget what he owes to you," said Captain Cadurcis. "How often has he spoken to me of you and Miss Herbert! It was only the other night — yes! not a week ago — that he made me sit up with him all night, while he was telling stories of Cherbury; you see I am quite familiar with the spot," he added, smiling.

"You are very intimate with your cousin, I see," said Lady Annabel.

"I live a great deal with him," said George Cadurcis. "You know we had never met or communicated; and it was not Plantagenet's fault, I am sure; for of all the generous, amiable, loveable beings, Cadurcis is the

best I ever met with in this world. Ever since we knew each other he has been a brother to me; and though our politics and opinions are so opposed, and we naturally live in such a different circle, he would have insisted even upon my having apartments in his house, nor is it possible for me to give you the slightest idea of the delicate and unceasing kindness I experience from him. If we had lived together all our lives, it would be impossible to be more united."

This eulogium rather softened Lady Annabel's heart; she even observed, "I always thought Lord Cadurcis naturally well disposed; I always hoped he would turn out well; but I was afraid, from what I heard, he was very much changed. He shows, however, his sense and good feeling in selecting you for his friend; for you are his natural one," she added, after a momentary pause.

"And then you know," he continued, "it is so purely kind of him; for of course I am not fit to be a companion for Cadurcis, and perhaps, as far as that, no one is. Of course we have not a thought in common. I know nothing but what I have picked up in a rough life; and he, you know, is the cleverest person that ever lived — at least I think so."

Lady Annabel smiled.

"Well, he is very young," she observed, "much your junior, Captain Cadurcis; and I hope he will yet prove a faithful steward of the great gifts that God has given him."

"I would stake all I hold dear," said the Captain, with great animation, "that Cadurcis turns out well.

He has such a good heart. Ah! Lady Annabel, if he be now and then a little irregular, only think of the temptations that assail him. Only one-and-twenty — his own master — and all London at his feet. It is too much for any one's head. But say or think what the world may, I know him better than they do; and I know there is not a finer creature in existence. I hope his old friends will not desert him," added Captain Cadurcis, with a smile which seemed to deprecate the severity of Lady Annabel, "for in spite of all his fame and prosperity, perhaps, after all, this is the time when he most needs them."

"Very possibly," said her ladyship rather dryly.

While the mother was engaged in this conversation with her neighbour respecting her former interesting acquaintance, such was the fame of Lord Cadurcis then in the metropolis, that he also formed the topic of conversation at another part of the table, to which the daughter was an attentive listener. The tone in which he was spoken of, however, was of a very different character. While no one disputed his genius, his principles, temper, and habits of life were submitted to the severest scrutiny; and it was with blended feelings of interest and astonishment that Venetia listened to the detail of wild opinions, capricious conduct, and extravagant and eccentric behaviour ascribed to the companion of her childhood, who had now become the spoiled child of society. A very shrewd gentleman, who had taken an extremely active part in this discussion, inquired of Venetia, next to whom he was seated,

whether she had read his lordship's last poem. He was extremely surprised when Venetia answered in the negative; but he seized the opportunity of giving her an elaborate criticism on the poetical genius of Cadurcis. "As for his style," said the critic, "no one can deny that is his own, and he will last by his style; as for his philosophy, and all these wild opinions of his, they will pass away, because they are not genuine, they are not his own, they are borrowed. He will outwrite them; depend upon it, he will. The fact is, as a friend of mine observed the other day, Herbert's writings have turned his head. Of course you could know nothing about them, but there are wonderful things in them, I can tell you that."

"I believe it most sincerely," said Venetia.

The critic stared at his neighbour. "Hush!" said he, "his wife and daughter are here. We must not talk of these things. You know Lady Annabel Herbert? There she is; a very fine woman too. And that is his daughter there, I believe, that dark girl with a turned-up nose. I cannot say she warrants the poetical address to her: —

> 'My precious pearl the false and glittering world
> Has ne'er polluted with its garish light!

She does not look much like a pearl, does she? She should keep in solitude, eh?"

The ladies rose and relieved Venetia from her embarrassment.

After dinner Lady Annabel introduced George Ca-

durcis to her daughter; and, seated by them both, he contrived without effort, and without the slightest consciousness of success, to confirm the pleasing impression in his favour which he had already made, and when they parted, it was even with a mutual wish that they might meet again.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the night after the drawing-room. Lord Cadurcis was at Brookes' dining at midnight, having risen since only a few hours. Being a mal-content, he had ceased to attend the Court, where his original reception had been most gracious, which he had returned by some very factious votes, and a very caustic lampoon.

A party of young men entered from the Court Ball; which in those days always terminated at midnight, whence the guests generally proceeded to Ranelagh; one or two of them seated themselves at the table at which Cadurcis was sitting. They were full of a new beauty who had been presented. Their violent and even extravagant encomiums excited his curiosity. Such a creature had never been seen, she was peerless, the most radiant of acknowledged charms had been dimmed before her. Their Majesties had accorded to her the most marked reception. A Prince of the blood had honoured her with his hand. Then they began to expatiate with fresh enthusiasm on her unparalleled loveliness.

"Oh! Cadurcis," said a young noble, who was one of his extreme admirers, "she is the only creature I ever beheld worthy of being one of your heroines."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked Cadurcis in a rather listless tone.

"The new beauty, of course."

"And who may she be?"

"Miss Herbert, to be sure. Who speaks or thinks of any one else?"

"What, Ve——, I mean Miss Herbert?" exclaimed Cadurcis, with no little energy.

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"Do you mean to say ——" and Cadurcis stopped and rose from the table, and joined the party round the fire. "What Miss Herbert is it?" he added after a short pause.

"Why *the* Miss Herbert; Herbert's daughter, to be sure. She was presented to-day by her mother."

"Lady Annabel?"

"The same."

"Presented to-day!" said Cadurcis audibly, yet speaking as it were to himself. "Presented to-day! Presented! How strange!"

"So every one thinks; one of the strangest things that ever happened," remarked a bystander.

"And I did not even know they were in town," continued Cadurcis, for, from his irregular hours, he had not seen his cousin since the party of yesterday. He began walking up and down the room, muttering, "Masham, Weymouth, London, presented at Court, and

I know nothing. How life changes! Venetia at Court, my Venetia!" Then turning round and addressing the young nobleman who had first spoken to him, he asked "if the ball were over."

"Yes; all the world are going to Ranelagh. Are you inclined to take a round?"

"I have a strange fancy," said Cadurcis, "and if you will go with me, I will take you in my vis-a-vis. It is here."

This was an irresistible invitation, and in a few minutes the companions were on their way; Cadurcis, apparently with no peculiar interest in the subject, leading the conversation very artfully to the presentation of Miss Herbert. His friend was heartily inclined to gratify his curiosity. He gave him the most ample details of Miss Herbert's person. Even her costume, and the sensation both produced; how she was presented by her mother, who, after so long an estrangement from the world, scarcely excited less impression, and the remarkable cordiality with which both mother and daughter were greeted by the sovereign and his royal consort.

The two young noblemen found Ranelagh very crowded, but the presence of Lord Cadurcis occasioned a sensation the moment he was recognised. Everywhere the whisper went round, and many parties crowded near to catch a glimpse of the hero of the day. "Which is he? That fair, tall young man? No, the other to be sure. Is it really he? How very distinguished! How very melancholy! Quite the poet. Do you think he is really so unhappy as he looks? I would sooner see

him than the King and Queen. He seems very young, but then he has seen so much of the world! Fine eyes, beautiful hair! I wonder who is his friend? How proud he must be! Who is that lady he bowed to? That is the Duke of —— speaking to him." Such were the remarks that might be caught in the vicinity of Lord Cadurcis as he took his round, gazed at by the assembled crowd, of whom many knew him only by fame, for the charm of Ranelagh was that it was rather a popular than a merely fashionable assembly. Society at large blended with the Court, which maintained and renewed its influence by being witnessed under the most graceful auspices. The personal authority of the aristocracy has decreased with the disappearance of Ranelagh and similar places of amusement, when rank was not exclusive, and luxury by the gratification it occasioned others seemed robbed of half its selfism.

In his second round, Lord Cadurcis recognised the approach of the Herberts. They formed a portion of a very large party. Lady Annabel was leaning on her brother, whom Cadurcis knew by sight; Venetia was at the side of her aunt, and several gentlemen were hovering about them; among them, to his surprise, his cousin, George Cadurcis, in his uniform, for he had been to Court and to the Court Ball. Venetia was talking with animation. She was in her Court dress and in powder. Her appearance was strange to him. He could scarcely recognise the friend of his childhood; but without any doubt in all that assembly, unrivalled in the whole world for beauty, grace, and splendour, she was

without a parallel: a cynosure on which all eyes were fixed.

So occupied were the ladies of the Herbert party by the conversation of their numerous and brilliant attendants, that the approach of any one else but Lord Cadurcis might have been unnoticed by them, but a hundred tongues before he drew nigh had prepared Venetia for his appearance. She was indeed most anxious to behold him, and though she was aware that her heart fluttered not slightly as the moment was at hand, she commanded her gaze, and her eyes met his, although she was very doubtful whether he might choose or care to recognise her. He bowed almost to the ground; and when Venetia had raised her responsive head he had passed by.

"Why, Cadurcis, you know Miss Herbert?" said his friend in a tone of some astonishment.

"Well; but it is a long time since I have seen her."

"Is she not beautiful?"

"I never doubted on that subject; I tell you, Scrope, we must contrive to join her party. I wish we had some of our friends among them. Here comes the Monteagle; aid me to escape her."

The most fascinating smile failed in arresting the progress of Cadurcis; fortunately, the lady was the centre of a brilliant band; — all that he had to do, therefore, was boldly to proceed.

"Do you think my cousin is altered since you knew him?" inquired George Cadurcis of Venetia.

"I scarcely had time to observe him," she replied.

"I wish you would let me bring him to you. He did not know until this moment you were in town. I have not seen him since we met yesterday."

"Oh, no," said Venetia. "Do not disturb him."

In time, however, Lord Cadurcis was again in sight; and now without any hesitation he stopped, and falling into the line by Miss Herbert, he addressed her: "I am proud of being remembered by Miss Herbert," he said.

"I am most happy to meet you," replied Venetia, with unaffected sincerity.

"And Lady Annabel, I have not been able to catch her eye — is she quite well? I was ignorant that you were in London until I heard of your triumph this night."

The Countess whispered her niece, and Venetia accordingly presented Lord Cadurcis to her aunt. This was a most gratifying circumstance to him. He was anxious, by some means or other, to effect his entrance into her circle; and he had an irresistible suspicion that Lady Annabel no longer looked upon him with eyes of favour. So he resolved to enlist the aunt as his friend. Few persons could be more winning than Cadurcis, when he willed it; and every attempt to please from one whom all emulated to gratify and honour, was sure to be successful. The Countess, who, in spite of politics, was a secret votary of his, was quite prepared to be enchanted. She congratulated herself on

forming, as she had long wished, an acquaintance with one so celebrated. She longed to pass Lady Monteagle in triumph. Cadurcis improved his opportunity to the utmost. It was impossible for any one to be more engaging; lively, yet at the same time gentle, and deferential with all his originality. He spoke, indeed, more to the aunt than to Venetia, but when he addressed the latter, there was a melting, almost a mournful tenderness in his tones, that alike affected her heart and charmed her imagination. Nor could she be insensible to the gratification she experienced as she witnessed, every instant, the emotion his presence excited among the passers by, and of which Cadurcis himself seemed so properly and so utterly unconscious. And this was Plantagenet!

Lord Cadurcis spoke of his cousin, who, on his joining the party, had assisted the arrangement by moving to the other side; and he spoke of him with a regard which pleased Venetia, though his lordship envied him his good fortune in having the advantage of a prior acquaintance with Miss Herbert in town; "but then we are old acquaintances in the country," he added, half in a playful, half in a melancholy tone, "are we not?"

"It is a long time that we have known each other, and it is a long time since we have met," replied Venetia.

"A delicate reproach," said his lordship; "but perhaps rather my misfortune than my fault. My thoughts have been often, I might say ever, at Cherbury."

"And the abbey; have you forgotten the abbey?"

"I have never been near it since a morning you perhaps remember," said his lordship in a low voice. "Ah! Miss Herbert," he continued, with a sigh, "I was young then; I have lived to change many opinions, and some of which you then disapproved."

The party stopped at a box just vacant, and in which the ladies seated themselves while their carriages were inquired for. Lord Cadurcis, with a rather faltering heart, went up to pay his respects to Venetia's mother. Lady Annabel received him with a courtesy, that however was scarcely cordial, but the Countess instantly presented him to her husband with an unction which a little astonished her sister-in-law. Then a whisper, but unobserved, passed between the Earl and his lady, and in a minute Lord Cadurcis had been invited to dine with them on the next day, and meet his old friends from the country. Cadurcis was previously engaged, but hesitated not a moment in accepting the invitation. The Monteagle party now passed by; the lady looked a little surprised at the company in which she found her favourite, and not a little mortified by his neglect. What business had Cadurcis to be speaking to that Miss Herbert? Was it not enough that the whole day not another name had scarcely crossed her ear, but the night must even witness the conquest of Lord Cadurcis by the new beauty? It was such bad ton, it was so unlike him, it was so underbred, for a person of his position immediately to bow before the new idol of the hour — and a Tory

girl too! It was the last thing she could have expected from him. She should, on the contrary, have thought that the very universal admiration which this Miss Herbert commanded would have been exactly the reason why a man like Cadurcis would have seemed almost unconscious of her existence. She determined to remonstrate with him; and she was sure of a speedy opportunity, for he was to dine with her on the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

Notwithstanding Lady Annabel's reserved demeanour, Lord Cadurcis, supported by the presence of his cousin, whom he had discovered to be a favourite of that lady, ventured to call upon her the next day, but she was out. They were to meet, however, at dinner, where Cadurcis determined to omit no opportunity to propitiate her. The Countess had a great deal of tact, and she contrived to make up a party to receive him, in which there were several of his friends, among them his cousin and the Bishop of —, and no strangers who were not, like herself, his great admirers; but if she had known more, she need not have given herself this trouble, for there was a charm among her guests of which she was ignorant and Cadurcis went determined to please and to be pleased.

At dinner he was seated next to Lady Annabel, and it was impossible for any person to be more de-

ferential, soft, and insinuating. He spoke of old days with emotion which he did not attempt to suppress; he alluded to the present with infinite delicacy. But it was very difficult to make way. Lady Annabel was courteous, but she was reserved. His lively reminiscences elicited from her no corresponding sentiment; and no art would induce her to dwell upon the present. If she only would have condescended to compliment him, it would have given him an opportunity of expressing his distaste of the life which he now led, and a description of the only life which he wished to lead; but Lady Annabel studiously avoided affording him any opening of the kind. She treated him like a stranger. She impressed upon him without effort that she would only consider him an acquaintance. How Cadurcis, satiated with the incense of the whole world, sighed for one single congratulation from Lady Annabel! Nothing could move her.

"I was so surprised to meet you last night," at length he again observed. "I have made so many inquiries after you. Our dear friend the Bishop, was, I fear, almost wearied with my inquiries after Cherbury. I know not how it was, I felt quite a pang when I heard that you had left it, and that all these years, when I have been conjuring up so many visions of what was passing under that dear roof, you were at Weymouth."

"Yes. We were at Weymouth some time."

"But do not you long to see Cherbury again? I cannot tell you how I pant for it. For my part, I

have seen the world, and I have seen enough of it. After all, the end of all our exertions is to be happy at home; that is the end of everything; don't you think so?"

"A happy home is certainly a great blessing," replied Lady Annabel; "and a very rare one."

"But why should it be so rare?" inquired Lord Cadurcis.

"It is our own fault," said Lady Annabel; "our vanity drives us from our hearths."

"But we soon return again, and calm and cooled. For my part, I have no object in life but to settle down at the old abbey, and never to quit again our woods. But I shall lead a dull life without my neighbours," he added, with a smile, and in a tone half coaxing.

"I suppose you never see Lord ******* now?" said Lady Annabel, mentioning his late guardian. There was, as Cadurcis fancied, some sarcasm in the question, though not in the tone in which it was asked.

"No, I never see him," his lordship answered firmly; "we differ in our opinions, and I differ from him with regret; but I differ from a sense of duty, and therefore I have no alternative."

"The claims of duty are of course paramount," observed Lady Annabel.

"You know my cousin?" said Cadurcis, to turn the conversation.

"Yes, and I like him very much; he appears

to be a sensible, amiable person, of excellent principles."

"I am not bound to admire George's principles," said Lord Cadurcis, gaily; "but I respect them, because I know that they are conscientious. I love George; he is my only relation, and he is my friend."

"I trust he will always be your friend, for I think you will then, at least, know one person on whom you can depend."

"I believe it. The friendships of the world are wind."

"I am surprised to hear you say so," said Lady Annabel.

"Why, Lady Annabel?"

"You have so many friends."

Lord Cadurcis smiled. "I wish," he said, after a little hesitation, "if only for 'Auld lang syne,' I might include Lady Annabel Herbert among them."

"I do not think there is any basis for friendship between us, my lord," she said, very dryly.

"The past must ever be with me," said Lord Cadurcis, "and I should have thought a sure and solid one."

"Our opinions on all subjects are so adverse, that I must believe that there could be no great sympathy in our feelings."

"My feelings are beyond my control," he replied; "they are, and must ever be, totally independent of my opinions."

Lady Annabel did not reply. His lordship felt baffled, but he was resolved to make one more effort.

"Do you know," he said, "I can scarcely believe myself in London to-day? To be sitting next to you, to see Miss Herbert, to hear Doctor Masham's voice — oh! does it not recall Cherbury, or Marringhurst, or that day at Cadurcis, when you were so good as to smile over my rough repast. Ah! Lady Annabel, those days were happy! those were feelings that can never die! All the glitter and hubbub of the world can never make me forget them, — can never make you, I hope, Lady Annabel, quite recall them with an effort. We were friends then: let us be friends now."

"I am too old to cultivate new friendships," said her ladyship; "and if we are to be friends, Lord Cadurcis, I am sorry to say that, after the interval that has occurred since we last parted, we should have to begin again."

"It is a long time," said his lordship, mournfully, "a very long time, and one — in spite of what the world may think — to which I cannot look back with any self-congratulation. I wished three years ago never to leave Cadurcis again. Indeed I did; and indeed it was not my fault that I quitted it."

"It was no one's fault, I hope, my lord. Whatever the cause may have been, I have ever remained quite ignorant of it; I wished, and wish, to remain ignorant of it. I, for one, have ever considered it the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence."

Cadurcis ground his teeth; a dark look came over

him which, when once it rose on his brow, was with difficulty dispelled; and for the remainder of the dinner he continued silent and gloomy.

He was, however, not unobserved by Venetia. She had watched his evident attempts to conciliate her mother with lively interest; she had witnessed their failure with sincere sorrow. In spite of that stormy interview, the results of which — in his hasty departure, and the severance of their acquaintance — she had often regretted, she had always retained for him the greatest affection. During these three years he had still, in her inmost heart, remained her own Plantagenet — her adopted brother, whom she loved, and in whose welfare her feelings were deeply involved. The mysterious circumstances of her birth, and the discoveries to which they had led, had filled her mind with a fanciful picture of human nature, over which she had long brooded. A great poet had become her ideal of a man. Sometimes she had sighed — when musing over her father and Plantagenet on the solitary seashore at Weymouth — that Cadurcis, instead of being the merely amiable, and somewhat narrow-minded being that she supposed, had not been invested with those brilliant and commanding qualities which she felt could alone master her esteem. Often had she, in those abstracted hours, played with her imagination in combining the genius of her father with the soft heart of that friend to whom she was so deeply attached. She had wished, in her reveries, that Cadurcis might have been a great man; that he might have existed in an

atmosphere of glory amid the plaudits and admiration of his race; and that then he might have turned from all that fame, so dear to them both, to the heart which could alone sympathise with the native simplicity of his childhood.

The ladies withdrew. The Bishop and another of the guests joined them after a short interval. The rest remained below, and drank their wine with the freedom not unusual in those days, Lord Cadurcis among them, although it was not his habit. But he was not convivial, though he never passed the bottle untouched. He was in one of those dark humours of which there was a latent spring in his nature, but which in old days had been kept in check by his simple life, his inexperienced mind, and the general kindness that greeted him, and which nothing but the caprice and perversity of his mother could occasionally develope. But since the great revolution in his position, since circumstances had made him alike acquainted with his nature, and had brought all society to acknowledge its superiority; since he had gained and felt his irresistible power, and had found all the world, and all the glory of it, at his feet, these moods had become more frequent. The slightest reaction in the self-complacency that was almost unceasingly stimulated by the applause of applauded men and the love of the loveliest women, instantly took the shape and found refuge in the immediate form of the darkest spleen, generally, indeed, brooding in silence, and, if speaking, expressing itself only in sarcasm. Cadurcis was indeed — as we have already

described him — the spoiled child of society; a froward and petted darling, not always to be conciliated by kindness, but furious when neglected or controlled. He was habituated to triumph; it had been his lot to come, to see, and to conquer; even the procrastination of certain success was intolerable to him; his energetic volition could not endure a check. To Lady Annabel Herbert, indeed, he was not exactly what he was to others; there was a spell in old associations from which he unconsciously could not emancipate himself, and from which it was his opinion he honoured her in not desiring to be free. He had his reasons for wishing to regain his old, his natural influence, over her heart; he did not doubt for an instant that, if Cadurcis sued, success must follow the condescending effort. He had sued, and he had been met with coldness, almost with disdain. He had addressed her in those terms of tenderness which experience had led him to believe were irresistible, yet to which he seldom had recourse, for hitherto he had not been under the degrading necessity of courting. He had dwelt with fondness on the insignificant past, because it was connected with her; he had regretted, or affected even to despise, the glorious present, because it seemed, for some indefinite cause, to have estranged him from her hearth. Yes! he had humbled himself before her; he had thrown with disdain at her feet all that dazzling fame and expanding glory which seemed his peculiar and increasing privilege. He had delicately conveyed to her that even these would be sacrificed, not only without a sigh, but with cheerful

delight, to find himself once more living, as of old, in the limited world of her social affections. Three years ago he had been rejected by the daughter, because he was an undistinguished youth. Now the mother recoiled from his fame. And who was this woman? The same cold, stern heart that had alienated the gifted Herbert; the same narrow, rigid mind that had repudiated ties that every other woman in the world would have gloried to cherish and acknowledge. And with her he had passed his prejudiced youth, and fancied, like an idiot, that he had found sympathy! Yes, so long as he was a slave, a mechanical, submissive slave, bowing his mind to all the traditionary bigotry which she adored, never daring to form an opinion for himself, worshipping her idol — custom, and labouring by habitual hypocrisy to perpetuate the delusions of all around her!

In the mean time, while Lord Cadurcis was chewing the cud of these bitter feelings, we will take the opportunity of explaining the immediate cause of Lady Annabel's frigid reception of his friendly advances. All that she had heard of Cadurcis, all the information she had within these few days so rapidly acquired of his character and conduct, were indeed not calculated to dispose her to witness the renewal of their intimacy with feelings of remarkable satisfaction. But this morning she had read his poem, the poem that all London was talking of, and she had read it with horror. She looked upon Cadurcis as a lost man.

With her, indeed, since her marriage, an imaginative mind had become an object of terror; but there were some peculiarities in the tone of Cadurcis' genius, which magnified to excess her general apprehension on this head. She traced, in every line, the evidences of a raging vanity, which she was convinced must prompt its owner to sacrifice, on all occasions, every feeling of duty to its gratification. Amid all the fervour of rebellious passions, and the violence of a wayward mind, a sentiment of profound egotism appeared to her impressed on every page she perused. Great as might have been the original errors of Herbert, — awful as in her estimation were the crimes to which they had led him, they might in the first instance be traced rather to a perverted view of society than of himself. But self was the idol of Cadurcis; self distorted into a phantom that seemed to Lady Annabel pregnant not only with terrible crimes, but with the basest and most humiliating vices. The certain degradation which in the instance of her husband had been the consequence of a bad system, would, in her opinion, in the case of Cadurcis, be the result of a bad nature; and when she called to mind that there had once been a probability that this individual might have become the husband of her Venetia, her child whom it had been the sole purpose of her life to save from the misery of which she herself had been the victim; that she had even dwelt on the idea with complacency, encouraged its progress, regretted its abrupt termination, but consoled herself by

the flattering hope that time, with even more favourable auspices, would mature it into fulfilment; she trembled, and turned pale.

It was to the Bishop that, after dinner, Lady Annabel expressed some of the feelings which the reappearance of Cadurcis had occasioned her.

"I see nothing but misery for his future," she exclaimed; "I tremble for him when he addresses me. In spite of the glittering surface on which he now floats, I foresee only a career of violence, degradation, and remorse."

"He is a problem difficult to solve," replied Masham; "but there are elements not only in his character, but his career, so different from those of the person of whom we were speaking, that I am not inclined at once to admit, that the result must necessarily be the same."

"I see none," replied Lady Annabel; "at least, none of sufficient influence to work any material change."

"What think you of his success?" replied Masham. "Cadurcis is evidently proud of it. With all his affected scorn of the world, he is the slave of society. He may pique the feelings of mankind, but I doubt whether he will outrage them."

"He is on such a dizzy eminence," replied Lady Annabel, "that I do not believe he is capable of calculating so finely. He does not believe, I am sure, in the possibility of resistance. His vanity will tempt him onwards."

"Not to persecution," said Masham. "Now my

opinion of Cadurcis is, that his egotism, or selfism, or whatever you may style it, will ultimately preserve him from any very fatal, from any irrecoverable excesses. He is of the world — worldly. All his works, all his conduct, tend only to astonish mankind. He is not prompted by any visionary ideas of ameliorating his species. The instinct of self-preservation will serve him as ballast."

"We shall see," said Lady Annabel; "for myself, whatever may be his end, I feel assured that great and disgraceful vicissitudes are in store for him."

"It is strange after what, in comparison with such extraordinary changes, must be esteemed so brief an interval," observed Masham, with a smile, "to witness such a revolution in his position. I often think to myself, can this indeed be our little Plantagenet?"

"It is awful!" said Lady Annabel; "much more than strange. For myself, when I recall certain indications of his feelings when he was last at Cadurcis, and think for a moment of the results to which they might have led, I shiver; I assure you, my dear Lord, I tremble from head to foot. And I encouraged him! I smiled with fondness on his feelings! I thought I was securing the peaceful happiness of my child! What can we trust to in this world! It is too dreadful to dwell upon! It must have been an interposition of Providence that Venetia escaped!"

"Dear little Venetia!" exclaimed the good Bishop; "for I believe I shall call her little Venetia to the day

of my death. How well she looks to-night! Her aunt is, I think, very fond of her! See!"

"Yes, it pleases me," said Lady Annabel; "but I do wish my sister was not such an admirer of Lord Cadurcis' poems. You cannot conceive how uneasy it makes me. I am quite annoyed that he was asked here to-day. Why ask him?"

"Oh! there is no harm," said Masham; "you must forget the past. By all accounts, Cadurcis is not a marrying man. Indeed, as I understood, marriage with him is at present quite out of the question. And as for Venetia, she rejected him before, and she will, if necessary, reject him again. He has been a brother to her, and after that he can be no more. Girls never fall in love with those with whom they are bred up."

"I hope — I believe there is no occasion for apprehension," replied Lady Annabel; "indeed it has scarcely entered my head. The very charms he once admired in Venetia can have no sway over him, as I should think, now. I should believe him as little capable of appreciating Venetia now, as he was when last at Cherbury, of anticipating the change in his own character."

"You mean opinions, my dear Lady, for characters never change. Believe me, Cadurcis is radically the same as in old days. Circumstances have only developed his latent predisposition."

"Not changed, my dear Lord! what, that innocent, sweet-tempered, docile child —"

"Hush! here he comes."

The Earl and his guests entered the room; a circle was formed round Lady Annabel; some evening visitors arrived; there was singing. It had not been the intention of Lord Cadurcis to return to the drawing-room after his rebuff by Lady Annabel; he had meditated making his peace at Monteagle House; but when the moment of his projected departure had arrived, he could not resist the temptation of again seeing Venetia. He entered the room last, and some moments after his companions. Lady Annabel, who watched the general entrance, concluded he had gone, and her attention was now fully engaged. Lord Cadurcis remained at the end of the room alone, apparently abstracted, and looking far from amiable; but his eye, in reality, was watching Venetia. Suddenly her aunt approached her, and invited the lady who was conversing with Miss Herbert to sing; Lord Cadurcis immediately advanced, and took her seat. Venetia was surprised that for the first time in her life with Plantagenet she felt embarrassed. She had met his look when he approached her, and had welcomed, or, at least, intended to welcome him with a smile, but she was at a loss for words; she was haunted with the recollection of her mother's behaviour to him at dinner, and she looked down on the ground, far from being at ease.

"Venetia!" said Lord Cadurcis.

She started.

"We are alone," he said; "let me call you Venetia when we are alone."

She did not — she could not reply; she felt confused; the blood rose to her cheek.

"How changed is everything!" continued Cadurcis. "To think the day should ever arrive when I should have to beg your permission to call you Venetia!"

She looked up; she met his glance. It was mournful; nay, his eyes were suffused with tears. She saw at her side the gentle and melancholy Plantagenet of her childhood.

"I cannot speak; I am agitated at meeting you," she said with her native frankness. "It is so long since we have been alone; and, as you say, all is so changed."

"But are you changed, Venetia?" he said in a voice of emotion, "for all other change is nothing."

"I meet you with pleasure," she replied; "I hear of your fame with pride. You cannot suppose that it is possible I should cease to be interested in your welfare."

"Your mother does not meet me with pleasure; she hears of nothing that has occurred with pride; your mother has ceased to take an interest in my welfare; and why should you be unchanged?"

"You mistake my mother."

"No, no," replied Cadurcis, shaking his head, "I have read her inmost soul to-day. Your mother hates me, — me, whom she once styled her son. She was a mother once to me, and you were my sister. If I have lost her heart, why have I not lost yours?"

"My heart, if you care for it, is unchanged," said Venetia.

"O Venetia, whatever you may think, I never wanted the solace of a sister's love more than I do at this moment."

"I pledged my affection to you when we were children," replied Venetia; "you have done nothing to forfeit it, and it is yours still."

"When we were children," said Cadurcis, musingly; "when we were innocent; when we were happy. You, at least, are innocent still; are you happy, Venetia?"

"Life has brought sorrows even to me, Plantagenet."

The blood deserted his heart when she called him Plantagenet; he breathed with difficulty.

"When I last returned to Cherbury," he said, "you told me you were changed, Venetia; you revealed to me on another occasion the secret cause of your affliction. I was a boy then, — a foolish, ignorant boy. Instead of sympathising with your heart-felt anxiety, my silly vanity was offended by feelings I should have shared, and soothed, and honoured. Ah! Venetia, well had it been for one of us that I had conducted myself more kindly, more wisely."

"Nay, Plantagenet, believe me, I remember that interview only to regret it. The recollection of it has always occasioned me great grief. We were both to blame; but we were both children then. We must pardon each other's faults."

"You will hear, — that is, if you care to listen, Venetia, — much of my conduct and opinions," con-

tinued Lord Cadurcis, "that may induce you to believe me headstrong and capricious. Perhaps I am less of both in all things than the world imagines. But of this be certain, that my feelings towards you have never changed, whatever you may permit them to be; and if some of my boyish judgments have, as was but natural, undergone some transformation, be you, my sweet friend, in some degree consoled for the inconsistency, since I have at length learned duly to appreciate one of whom we then alike knew little, but whom a natural inspiration taught you, at least, justly to appreciate — I need not say I mean the illustrious father of your being."

Venetia could not restrain her tears; she endeavoured to conceal her agitated countenance behind the fan with which she was fortunately provided.

"To me a forbidden subject," said Venetia, "at least with them I could alone converse upon it, but one that my mind never deserts."

"Oh! Venetia," exclaimed Lord Cadurcis with a sigh, "would we were both with him!"

"A wild thought," she murmured, "and one I must not dwell upon."

"We shall meet, I hope," said Lord Cadurcis; "we must meet — meet often. I called upon your mother to-day, fruitlessly. You must attempt to conciliate her. Why should we be parted? We, at least, are friends, and more than friends. I cannot exist unless we meet, and meet with the frankness of old days."

"I think you mistake mamma; I think you may,

indeed. Remember how lately she has met you, and after how long an interval! A little time, and she will resume her former feelings, and believe that you have never forfeited yours. Besides, we have friends, mutual friends. My aunt admires you, and here I naturally must be a great deal. And the Bishop, — he still loves you; that I am sure he does: and your cousin, — mamma likes your cousin. I am sure if you can manage only to be patient, — if you will only attempt to conciliate a little, all will be as before. Remember, too, how changed your position is," Venetia added with a smile; "you allow me to forget you are a great man, but mamma is naturally restrained by all this wonderful revolution. When she finds that you really are the Lord Cadurcis whom she knew such a very little boy, — the Lord Cadurcis who, without her aid, would never have been able even to write his fine poems, — oh! she must love you again! How can she help it?"

Cadurcis smiled. "We shall see," he said. "In the mean time do not you desert me, Venetia."

"That is impossible," she replied; "the happiest of my days have been passed with you. You remember the inscription on the jewel? I shall keep to my vows."

"That was a very good inscription so far as it went," said Cadurcis; and then, as if a little alarmed at his temerity, he changed the subject.

"Do you know," said Venetia, after a pause, "I am treating you all this time as a poet, merely in deference to public opinion. Not a line have I been per-

mitted to read; but I am resolved to rebel, and you must arrange it all."

"Ah!" said the enraptured Cadurcis, "this is fame!"

At this moment the Countess approached them, and told Venetia that her mother wished to speak to her. Lady Annabel had discovered the tête-à-tête, and resolved instantly to terminate it. Lord Cadurcis, however, who was quick as lightning, read all that was necessary in Venetia's look. Instead of instantly retiring, he remained some little time longer, talked a great deal to the Countess, — who was perfectly enchanted with him, — even sauntered up to the singers, and complimented them, and did not make his bow until he had convinced at least the mistress of the mansion, if not her sister-in-law, that it was not Venetia Herbert who was his principal attraction in this agreeable society.

CHAPTER XI.

The moment he had quitted Venetia, Lord Cadurcis returned home. He could not endure the usual routine of gaiety after her society; and his coachman, often waiting until five o'clock in the morning at Monteagle House, could scarcely assure himself of his good fortune in this exception to his accustomed trial of patience. The vis-a-vis stopped, and Lord Cadurcis bounded out with a light step and a lighter heart. His table was covered with letters. The first one that caught his eye

was a missive from Lady Monteagle. Cadurcis seized it like a wild animal darting on its prey, tore it in half without opening it, and, grasping the poker, crammed it with great energy into the fire. This exploit being achieved, Cadurcis began walking up and down the room; and indeed he paced it for nearly a couple of hours in a deep reverie, and evidently under a considerable degree of excitement, for his gestures were violent, and his voice often audible. At length, about an hour after midnight, he rang for his valet, tore off his cravat, and hurled it to one corner of the apartment, called for his robe de chambre, soda water, and more lights, seated himself, and began pouring forth, faster almost than his pen could trace the words, the poem that he had been meditating ever since he had quitted the roof where he had met Venetia. She had expressed a wish to read his poems; he had resolved instantly to compose one for her solitary perusal. Thus he relieved his heart: —

I.

Within a cloistered pile, whose Gothic towers,
Rose by the margin of a sedgy lake,
Embosomed in a valley of green bowers,
And girt by many a grove, and ferny brake
Loved by the antlered deer; a tender youth
Whom Time to childhood's gentle sway of love
Still spared; yet innocent as is the dove,
Nor wounded yet by Care's relentless tooth;
Stood musing: of that fair antique domain
The orphan Lord! And yet no childish thought

With wayward purpose holds its transient reign
In his young mind, with deeper feelings fraught;
Then mystery all to him, and yet a dream,
That Time has touched with its revealing beam.

II.

There came a maiden to that lonely boy
And like to him as is the morn to night;
Her sunny face a very type of joy,
And with her soul's unclouded lustre bright.
Still scantier summers had her brow illumed
Than that on which she threw a witching smile,
Unconscious of the spell that could beguile
His being of the burthen it was doomed
By his ancestral blood to bear — a spirit
Rife with desponding thoughts and fancies drear,
A moody soul that men sometimes inherit,
And worse than all the woes the world may bear.
But when he met that maiden's dazzling eye,
He bade each gloomy image baffled fly.

III.

Amid the shady woods and sunny lawns
The maiden and the youth now wander, gay
As the bright birds, and happy as the fawns,
Their sportive rivals, that around them play;
Their light hands linked in love, the golden hours
Unconscious fly, while thus they graceful roam,
And careless ever till the voice of home
Recalled them from their sunshine and their flowers;
For then they parted: to his lonely pile
The orphan-chief, for though his woe to lull,
The maiden called him brother, her fond smile
Gladdened another hearth, while his was dull.
Yet as they parted, she reproved his sadness,
And for her sake she gaily whispered gladness.

IV.

She was the daughter of a noble race,
That beauteous girl, and yet she owed her name
To one who needs no herald's skill to trace
His blazoned lineage, for his lofty fame
Lives in the mouth of men, and distant climes
Re-echo his wide glory; where the brave
Are honoured, where 'tis noble deemed to save
A prostrate nation, and for future times
Work with a high devotion, that no taunt,
Or ribald lie, or zealot's eager curse,
Or the short-sighted world's neglect can daunt,
That name is worshipped! His immortal verse
Blends with his god-like deeds, a double spell
To bind the coming age he loved too well!

V.

For from his ancient home, a scatterling,
They drove him forth, unconscious of their prize,
And branded as a vile unhallowed thing,
The man who struggled only to be wise.
And even his hearth rebelled, the duteous wife
Whose bosom well might soothe in that dark hour,
Swelled with her gentle force the world's harsh power.
And aimed her dart at his devoted life.
That struck; the rest his mighty soul might scorn,
But when his household gods averted stood,
'Twas the last pang that cannot well be borne
When tortured e'en to torpor: his heart's blood
Flowed to the unseen blow: then forth he went,
And gloried in his ruthless banishment.

VI.

A new-born pledge of love within his home,
His alien home, the exiled father left;
And when, like Cain, he wandered forth to roam,
A Cain without his solace, all bereft:

Stole down his pallid cheek the scalding tear.
To think a stranger to his tender love
His child must grow, untroubled where might rove
His restless life, or taught perchance to fear
Her father's name, and bred in sullen hate,
Shrink from his image. Thus the gentle maid,
Who with her smiles had soothed an orphan's fate,
Had felt an orphan's pang; yet undismayed,
Though taught to deem her sire the child of shame
She clung with instinct to that reverent name!

VII.

Time flew; the boy became a man, no more
His shadow falls upon his cloistered hall,
But to a stirring world he learn'd to pour
The passion of his being, skilled to call
From the deep caverns of his musing thought
Shadows to which they bowed, and on their mind
To stamp the image of his own; the wind
Though all unseen, with force or odour fraught
Can sway mankind, and thus a poet's voice,
Now touched with sweetness, now inflamed with rage,
Though breath, can make us grieve and then rejoice;
Such is the spell of his creative page,
That blends with all our moods; and thoughts can yield
That all have felt, and yet till then were sealed.

VIII.

The lute is sounding in a chamber bright
With a high festival, — on every side,
Soft in the gleamy blaze of mellowed light,
Fair women smile, and dancers graceful glide;
And words still sweeter than a serenade
Are breathed with guarded voice and speaking eyes,
By joyous hearts in spite of all their sighs;
But bye-gone fantasies that ne'er can fade
Retain the pensive spirit of the youth;
Reclined against a column he surveys

His laughing compeers with a glance, in sooth,
Careless of all their mirth: for other days
Enchain him with their vision, the bright hours
Passed with the maiden in their sunny bowers.

IX.

Why turns his brow so pale, why starts to life
That languid eye? What form before unseen,
With all the spells of hallowed memory rife,
Now rises on his vision? As the Queen
Of Beauty from her bed of sparkling foam
Sprang to the azure light; and felt the air —
Soft as her cheek — the wavy dancers bear
To his rapt sight a mien that calls his home,
His cloistered home, before him, with his dreams
Prophetic strangely blending. The bright muse
Of his dark childhood still divinely beams
Upon his being; glowing with the hues
That painters love, when raptured pencils soar
To trace a form that nations may adore!

X.

One word alone within her thrilling ear
Breathed with hushed voice the brother of her heart,
And that for aye is hidden. With a tear
Smiling she strove to conquer, see her start,
The bright blood rising to her quivering cheek,
And meet the glance she hastened once to greet,
When not a thought had he, save in her sweet
And solacing society; to seek
Her smiles his only life! Ah! happy prime
Of cloudless purity, no stormy fame
His unknown sprite then stirred, a golden time
Worth all the restless splendour of a name.
And one soft accent from those gentle lips
Might all the plaudits of a world eclipse.

XI.

My tale is done; and if some deem it strange
My fancy thus should droop, deign then to learn
My tale is truth: imagination's range
Its bounds exact may touch not: to discern
Far stranger things than poets ever feign,
In life's perplexing annals, is the fate
Of those who act, and musing, penetrate
The mystery of Fortune: to whose reign
The haughtiest brow must bend; 'twas passing strange
The youth of these fond children; strange the flush
Of his high fortunes and his spirit's change;
Strange was the maiden's tear, the maiden's blush;
Strange were his musing thoughts and trembling heart:
'Tis strange they met, and stranger if they part!

CHAPTER XII.

When Lady Monteagle discovered, which she did a very few hours after the mortifying event, where Lord Cadurcis had dined the day on which he had promised to be her guest, she was very indignant, but her vanity was more offended than her self-complacency. She was annoyed that Cadurcis should have compromised his exalted reputation by so publicly dangling in the train of the new beauty: still more that he should have signified in so marked a manner the impression which the fair stranger had made upon him, by instantly accepting an invitation to a house so totally unconnected with his circle, and where, had it not been to meet this Miss Herbert, it would of course never have entered his head to be a visitor. But, on

the whole, Lady Monteagle was rather irritated than jealous; and far from suspecting that there was the slightest chance of her losing her influence, such as it might be, over Lord Cadurcis, all that she felt was, that less lustre must redound to her from its possession and exercise, if it were obvious to the world that his attentions could be so easily attracted and commanded.

When Lord Cadurcis, therefore, having dispatched his poem to Venetia, paid his usual visit on the next day to Monteagle House, he was received rather with sneers than reproaches, as her ladyship, with no superficial knowledge of society or his lordship's character, was clearly of opinion that this new fancy of her admirer was to be treated rather with ridicule than indignation; and, in short, as she had discovered that Cadurcis was far from being insensible to mockery, that was clearly a fit occasion, to use a phrase then very much in vogue, for *quizzing*.

"How d'ye do," said her ladyship, with a very arch smile, "I really could not expect to see you!"

Cadurcis looked a little confused; he detested scenes, and now he dreaded one.

"You seem quite distrait," continued Lady Monteagle, after a moment's pause, which his lordship ought to have broken. "But no wonder, if the world be right."

"The world cannot be wrong," said Cadurcis sarcastically.

"Had you a pleasant party yesterday?"

"Very."

"Lady — must have been quite charmed to have you at last," said Lady Monteagle. "I suppose she exhibited you to all her friends, as if you were one of the savages that went to Court the other day."

"She was very courteous."

"Oh! I can fancy her flutter! For my part, if there be one character in the world more odious than another, I think it is a fussy woman. Lady —, with Lord Cadurcis dining with her, and the new beauty for a niece, must have been in a most delectable state of bustle."

"I thought she was rather quiet," said her companion with provoking indifference. "She seemed to me a very agreeable person."

"I suppose you mean Miss Herbert?" said Lady Monteagle.

"Oh! these are very moderate expressions to use in reference to a person like Miss Herbert."

"You know what they said of you two at Ranelagh?" said her ladyship.

"No," said Lord Cadurcis, somewhat changing colour, and speaking through his teeth. — "Something devilish pleasant, I dare say."

"They call you Sedition and Treason," said Lady Monteagle.

"Then we are well suited," said Lord Cadurcis.

"She certainly is a most beautiful creature," said her ladyship.

"I think so," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Rather too tall, I think."

"Do you?"

"Beautiful complexion certainly; wants delicacy, I think."

"Do you?"

"Fine eyes? Grey, I believe. Cannot say I admire grey eyes. Certain sign of bad temper, I believe, grey eyes."

"Are they?"

"I did not observe her hand. I dare say a little coarse. Fair people who are tall generally fail in the hand and arm. What sort of a hand and arm has she?"

"I did not observe anything coarse about Miss Herbert."

"Ah! you admire her. And you have cause. No one can deny she is a fine girl, and every one must regret, that with her decidedly provincial air and want of style altogether, which might naturally be expected, considering the rustic way I understand she has been brought up, (an old house in the country, with a methodistical mother,) that she should have fallen into such hands as her aunt. Lady — is enough to spoil any girl's fortune in London."

"I thought that the — were people of the highest consideration," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Consideration!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle. "If you mean that they are people of rank, and good blood, and good property, they are certainly people of consideration; but they are Goths, Vandals, Huns, Calmucks, Canadian savages! They have no fashion, no style, no ton, no influence in the world. It is impossible

that a greater misfortune could have befallen your beauty than having such an aunt. Why, no man who has the slightest regard for his reputation would be seen in her company. She is a regular quiz, and you cannot imagine how everybody was laughing at you the other night."

"I am very much obliged to them," said Lord Cadurcis.

"And, upon my honour," continued Lady Monteagle, "speaking merely as your friend, and not being the least jealous — Cadurcis, do not suppose that — not a twinge has crossed my mind on that score; but still I must tell you that it was most ridiculous for a man like you, to whom everybody looks up, and from whom the slightest attention is an honour, to go and fasten yourself the whole night upon a rustic simpleton, something between a wax-doll and a dairy-maid, whom every fool in London was staring at; the very reason why you should not have appeared to have been even aware of her existence."

"We have all our moments of weakness, Gertrude," said Lord Cadurcis, perfectly charmed that the lady was so thoroughly unaware and unsuspicious of his long and intimate connection with the Herberts. "I suppose it was my cursed vanity. I saw, as you say, every fool staring at her, and so I determined to show that in an instant I could engross her attention."

"Of course, I know it was only that; but you should not have gone and dined there, Cadurcis," added the lady, very seriously. "That compromised you; but,

by cutting them in future in the most marked manner, you may get over it."

"You really think I may?" inquired Lord Cadurcis, with some anxiety.

"Oh! I have no doubt of it," said Lady Monteagle.

"What it is to have a friend like you, Gertrude," said Cadurcis, "a friend who is neither a Goth, nor a Vandal, nor a Hun, nor a Calmuck, nor a Canadian savage; but a woman of fashion, style, ton, influence in the world. It is impossible that a greater piece of good fortune could have befallen me than having you for a friend."

"Ah! méchant! you may mock," said the lady, triumphantly, for she was quite satisfied with the turn the conversation had taken; "but I am glad for your sake that you take such a sensible view of the case."

Notwithstanding, however, this sensible view of the case, after lounging an hour at Monteagle House, Lord Cadurcis' carriage stopped at the door of Venetia's Gothic aunt. He was not so fortunate as to meet his heroine; but nevertheless he did not esteem his time entirely thrown away, and consoled himself for the disappointment by confirming the favourable impression he had already made in this establishment, and cultivating an intimacy which he was assured must contribute many opportunities of finding himself in the society of Venetia. From this day indeed he was a frequent guest at her uncle's, and generally contrived also to meet her several times in the week at some great assembly; but here, both from the occasional

presence of Lady Monteagle, although party spirit deterred her from attending many circles where Cadurcis was now an habitual visitant, and from the crowd of admirers who surrounded the Herberts, he rarely found an opportunity for any private conversation with Venetia. His friend the Bishop also, notwithstanding the prejudices of Lady Annabel, received him always with cordiality, and he met the Herberts more than once at his mansion. At the opera and in the park also he hovered about them, in spite of the sarcasms or reproaches of Lady Monteagle; for the reader is not to suppose that that lady continued to take the same self-complacent view of Lord Cadurcis' acquaintance with the Herberts which she originally adopted, and at first flattered herself was the just one. His admiration of Miss Herbert had become the topic of general conversation; it could no longer be concealed or disguised. But Lady Monteagle was convinced that Cadurcis was not a marrying man, and persuaded herself that this was a fancy which must evaporate. Moreover, Monteagle House still continued his spot of most constant resort; for his opportunities of being with Venetia were, with all his exertions, limited, and he had no other resource which pleased him so much as the conversation and circle of the bright goddess of his party. After some fiery scenes therefore with the divinity, which only led to his prolonged absence, for the profound and fervent genius of Cadurcis revolted from the base sentiment and mock emotions of society, the lady reconciled herself to her lot, still believing herself the

most envied woman in London, and often ashamed of being jealous of a country girl.

The general result of the fortnight which elapsed since Cadurcis renewed his acquaintance with his Cherbury friends was, that he had become convinced of his inability of propitiating Lady Annabel, was devotedly attached to Venetia, though he had seldom an opportunity of intimating feelings, which the cordial manner in which she ever conducted herself to him gave him no reason to conclude desperate; at the same time that he had contrived that a day should seldom elapse, which did not under some circumstances, however unfavourable, bring them together, while her intimate friends and the circles in which she passed most of her life always witnessed his presence with favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

We must, however, endeavour to be more intimately acquainted with the heart and mind of Venetia in her present situation, so strongly contrasting with the serene simplicity of her former life, than the limited and constrained opportunities of conversing with the companion of his childhood enjoyed by Lord Cadurcis could possibly enable him to become. Let us recur to her on the night when she returned home, after having met with Plantagenet at her uncle's, and having pursued a conversation with him, so unexpected, so strange, and so affecting! She had been silent in the carriage, and

retired to her room immediately. She retired to ponder. The voice of Cadurcis lingered in her ear; his tearful eye still caught her vision. She leant her head upon her hand, and sighed! Why did she sigh? What at this instant was her uppermost thought? Her mother's dislike of Cadurcis. "Your mother hates me." These had been his words; these were the words she repeated to herself, and on whose fearful sounds she dwelt. "Your mother hates me." If by some means she had learnt a month ago at Weymouth, that her mother hated Cadurcis, that his general conduct had been such as to excite Lady Annabel's odium, Venetia might have for a moment been shocked that her old companion in whom she had once been so interested, had by his irregular behaviour incurred the dislike of her mother, by whom he had once been so loved. But it would have been a very transient emotion. She might have mused over past feelings and past hopes in a solitary ramble on the sea-shore; she might even have shed a tear over the misfortunes or infelicity of one who had once been to her a brother; but, perhaps, nay probably, on the morrow the remembrance of Plantagenet would scarcely have occurred to her. Long years had elapsed since their ancient fondness; a very considerable interval since even his name had met her ear. She had heard nothing of him that could for a moment arrest her notice or command her attention.

But now the irresistible impression that her mother disliked this very individual filled her with intolerable grief. What occasioned this change in her feelings,

this extraordinary difference in her emotions? There was, apparently, but one cause. She had met Cadurcis. Could then a glance, could even the tender intonations of that unrivalled voice, and the dark passion of that speaking eye, work in an instant such marvels? Could they revive the past so vividly, that Plantagenet in a moment resumed his ancient place in her affections? No, it was not that: it was less the tenderness of the past that made Venetia mourn her mother's sternness to Cadurcis, than the feelings of the future. For now she felt that her mother's heart was not more changed towards this personage than was her own.

It seemed to Venetia that even before they met, from the very moment that his name had so strangely caught her eye in the volume on the first evening she had visited her relations, that her spirit suddenly turned to him. She had never heard that name mentioned since without a fluttering of the heart which she could not repress, and an emotion she could ill conceal. She loved to hear others talk of him, and yet scarcely dared speak of him herself. She recalled her emotion at unexpectedly seeing his portrait when with her aunt, and her mortification when her mother deprived her of the poem which she sighed to read. Day after day something seemed to have occurred to fix her brooding thoughts with fonder earnestness on his image. At length they met. Her emotion when she first recognised him at Ranelagh and felt him approaching her, was one of those tumults of the heart that form almost a crisis in our sensations. With what difficulty had she main-

tained herself! Doubtful whether he would even formally acknowledge her presence, her vision as if by fascination had nevertheless met his, and grew dizzy as he passed. In the interval that had elapsed between his first passing and then joining her, what a chaos was her mind! What a wild blending of all the scenes and incidents of her life! What random answers had she made to those with whom she had been before conversing with ease and animation! And then when she unexpectedly found Cadurcis at her side, and listened to the sound of that familiar voice, familiar and yet changed, expressing so much tenderness in its tones, and in its words such deference and delicate respect — existence felt to her that moment affluent with a blissful excitement of which she had never dreamed!

Her life was a reverie until they met again, in which she only mused over his fame, and the strange relations of their careers. She had watched the conduct of her mother to him at dinner with poignant sorrow; she scarcely believed that she should have an opportunity of expressing to him her sympathy. And then what had followed? A conversation, every word of which had touched her heart; a conversation that would have entirely controlled her feelings even if he had not already subjected them. The tone in which he so suddenly had pronounced "Venetia," was the sweetest music to which she had ever listened. His allusion to her father had drawn tears, which could not be restrained even in a crowded saloon. Now she wept plenteously. It was so generous, so noble, so kind, so affectionate!

Dear, dear Cadurcis, is it wonderful that you should be loved!

Then falling into a reverie of sweet and unbroken stillness, with her eyes fixed in abstraction on the fire, Venetia reviewed her life from the moment she had known Plantagenet. Not an incident that had ever occurred to them that did not rise obedient to her magical bidding. She loved to dwell upon the time when she was the consolation of his sorrows, and when Cherbury was to him a pleasant refuge! Oh! she felt sure her mother must remember those fond days, and love him as she once did! She pictured to herself the little Plantagenet of her childhood, so serious and so pensive when alone or with others, yet with her at times so gay and wild; and sarcastic: forebodings all of that deep and brilliant spirit, which had since stirred up the heart of a great nation, and dazzled the fancy of an admiring world. The change too in their mutual lots was also, to a degree, not free from that sympathy that had ever bound them together. A train of strange accidents had brought Venetia from her spell-bound seclusion, placed her suddenly in the most brilliant circle of civilization, and classed her among not the least admired of its favoured members. And whom had she come to meet? Whom did she find in this new and splendid life the most courted and considered of its community; crowned as it were with garlands, and perfumed with the incense of a thousand altars? Her own Plantagenet. It was passing strange.

The morrow brought the verses from Cadurcis.

They greatly affected her. The picture of their childhood, and of the singular sympathy of their mutual situations, and the description of her father, called forth her tears; she murmured, however, at the allusion to her other parent. It was not just, it could not be true. These verses were not, of course, shown to Lady Annabel. Would they have been shown, even if they had not contained the allusion? The question is not perplexing. Venetia had her secret, and a far deeper one than the mere reception of a poem; all confidence between her and her mother had expired. Love had stept in, and before his magic touch, the discipline of a life expired in an instant.

From all this an idea may be formed of the mood in which, during the fortnight before alluded to, Venetia was in the habit of meeting Lord Cadurcis. During this period not the slightest conversation respecting him had occurred between her mother and herself. Lady Annabel never mentioned him, and her brow clouded when his name, as was often the case, was introduced. At the end of this fortnight, it happened that her aunt and mother were out together in the carriage, and had left her in the course of the morning at her uncle's house. During this interval, Lord Cadurcis called, and having ascertained, through a garrulous servant, that though his mistress was out, Miss Herbert was in the drawing room, he immediately took the opportunity of being introduced. Venetia was not a little surprised at his appearance, and, conscious of her mother's feelings upon the subject, for a moment a little agitated, yet,

it must be confessed, as much pleased. She seized this occasion of speaking to him about his verses, for hitherto she had only been able to acknowledge the receipt of them by a word. While she expressed without affectation the emotions they had occasioned her, she complained of his injustice to her mother: this was the cause of an interesting conversation of which her father was the subject, and for which she had long sighed. With what deep, unbroken attention she listened to her companion's enthusiastic delineation of his character and career! What multiplied questions did she not ask him, and how eagerly, how amply, how affectionately he satisfied her just and natural curiosity! Hours flew away while they indulged in this rare communion.

"Oh! that I could see him!" sighed Venetia.

"You will," replied Plantagenet, "your destiny requires it. You will see him as surely as you beheld that portrait that it was the labour of a life to prevent you beholding."

Venetia shook her head; "And yet," she added musingly, "my mother loves him."

"Her life proves it," said Cadurcis, bitterly.

"I think it does," replied Venetia, sincerely.

"I pretend not to understand her heart," he answered, "it is an enigma that I cannot solve. I ought not to believe that she is without one; but, at any rate, her pride is deeper than her love."

"They were ill suited," said Venetia, mournfully; "and yet it is one of my dreams that they may yet meet."

"Ah! Venetia," he exclaimed, in a voice of great softness, "they had not known each other from their childhood, like us. They met, and they parted, alike in haste."

Venetia made no reply; her eyes were fixed in abstraction on a hand-screen, which she was unconscious that she held.

"Tell me," said Cadurcis, drawing his chair close to hers; "tell me, Venetia, if —."

At this moment a thundering knock at the door announced the return of the Countess and her sister-in-law. Cadurcis rose from his seat, but his chair, which still remained close to that on which Venetia was sitting, did not escape the quick glance of her mortified mother. The Countess welcomed Cadurcis with extreme cordiality; Lady Annabel only returned his very courteous bow.

"Stop and dine with us, my dear Lord," said the Countess. "We are only ourselves, and Lady Annabel and Venetia."

"I thank you, Clara," said Lady Annabel, "but we cannot stop to-day."

"Oh!" exclaimed her sister. "It will be such a disappointment to Philip. Indeed you must stay," she added, in a coaxing tone; "we shall be such an agreeable little party, with Lord Cadurcis."

"I cannot, indeed, my dear Clara," replied Lady Annabel; "not to-day, indeed not to-day. Come Venetia!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Lady Annabel was particularly kind to Venetia on their return to their hotel, otherwise her daughter might have fancied that she had offended her, for she was silent. Venetia did not doubt that the presence of Lord Cadurcis was the reason that her mother would not remain and dine at her uncle's. This conviction grieved Venetia, but she did not repine; she indulged the fond hope that time would remove the strong prejudice which Lady Annabel now so singularly entertained against one in whose welfare she was originally so deeply interested. During their simple and short repast Venetia was occupied in a reverie, in which, it must be owned, Cadurcis greatly figured, and answered the occasional though kind remarks of her mother with an absent air.

After dinner, Lady Annabel drew her chair towards the fire — for although May, the weather was chill — and said, "A quiet evening at home, Venetia, will be a relief after all this gaiety." Venetia assented to her mother's observation, and nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed without another word being spoken. Venetia had taken up a book, and Lady Annabel was apparently lost in her reflections. At length she said, somewhat abruptly, "It is more than three years, I think, since Lord Cadurcis left Cherbury?"

"Yes; it is more than three years," replied Venetia.

"He quitted us suddenly."

"Very suddenly," agreed Venetia.

"I never asked you whether you knew the cause,

Venetia," continued her mother, "but I always concluded that you did. I suppose I was not in error?"

This was not a very agreeable inquiry. Venetia did not reply to it with her previous readiness and indifference. That indeed was impossible; but, with her accustomed frankness, after a moment's hesitation, she answered, "Lord Cadurcis never specifically stated the cause to me, mamma; indeed I was myself surprised at his departure, but some conversation had occurred between us on the very morning he quitted Cadurcis, which, on reflection, I could not doubt occasioned that departure."

"Lord Cadurcis preferred his suit to you, Venetia, and you rejected him?" said Lady Annabel.

"It is as you believe," replied Venetia, not a little agitated.

"You did wisely, my child, and I was weak ever to have regretted your conduct."

"Why should you think so, dearest mamma?"

"Whatever may have been the cause that impelled your conduct then," said Lady Annabel, "I shall ever esteem your decision as a signal interposition of Providence in your favour. Except his extreme youth, there was apparently no reason which should not have induced you to adopt a very different decision. I tremble when I think what might have been the consequences."

"Tremble! dearest mother?"

"Tremble, Venetia. My only thought in this life is the happiness of my child. It was in peril."

"Nay, I trust not that, mamma: you are prejudiced against Plantagenet. It makes me very unhappy, and him also."

"He is again your suitor?" said Lady Annabel, with a scrutinising glance.

"Indeed he is not."

"He will be," said Lady Annabel. "Prepare yourself. Tell me, then, are your feelings the same towards him as when he last quitted us?"

"Feelings, mamma!" said Venetia, echoing her mother's words; for indeed the question was one very difficult to answer; "I ever loved Plantagenet; I love him still."

"But do you love him now as then? Then you looked upon him as a brother. He has no soul now for sisterly affections. I beseech you tell me, my child — me, your mother, your friend, your best, your only friend — tell me, have you for a moment repented that you ever refused to extend to him any other affection?"

"I have not thought of the subject, mamma; I have not wished to think of the subject; I have had no occasion to think of it. Lord Cadurcis is not my suitor now."

"Venetia!" said Lady Annabel, "I cannot doubt you love me."

"Dearest mother!" exclaimed Venetia, in a tone of mingled fondness and reproach, and she rose from her seat and embraced Lady Annabel.

"My happiness is an object to you, Venetia?" continued Lady Annabel.

"Mother, mother," said Venetia, in a deprecatory tone. "Do not ask such cruel questions! Whom should I love but you, the best, the dearest mother that ever existed! And what object can I have in life that for a moment can be placed in competition with your happiness?"

"Then, Venetia, I tell you," said Lady Annabel, in a solemn, yet excited voice, "that that happiness is gone for ever, nay, my very life will be the forfeit, if I ever live to see you the bride of Lord Cadurcis."

"I have no thought of being the bride of any one," said Venetia, "I am happy with you. I wish never to leave you."

"My child, the fulfilment of such a wish is not in the nature of things," replied Lady Annabel. "The day will come when we must part; I am prepared for the event — nay, I look forward to it not only with resignation, but delight, when I think it may increase your happiness; but were that step to destroy it — oh! then, then I could live no more. I can endure my own sorrows, I can struggle with my own bitter lot, I have some sources of consolation which enable me to endure my own misery without repining, but yours, yours, Venetia, I could not bear. No! if once I were to behold you lingering in life as your mother, with blighted hopes and with a heart broken, if hearts can break, I should not survive the spectacle; I know myself, Venetia, I could not survive it."

"But why anticipate such misery? Why indulge in such gloomy forebodings? Am I not happy now? Do you not love me?"

Venetia had drawn her chair close to that of her mother; she sat by her side and held her hand.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, after a pause of some minutes, and in a low voice, "I must speak to you on a subject on which we have never conversed. I must speak to you," and here Lady Annabel's voice dropped lower and lower, but still its tones were very distinct, although she expressed herself with evident effort — "I must speak to you about — your father."

Venetia uttered a faint cry, she clenched her mother's hand with a convulsive grasp, and sank upon her bosom. She struggled to maintain herself, but the first sound of that name from her mother's lips, and all the long-suppressed emotions that it conjured up, overpowered her. The blood seemed to desert her heart; still she did not faint; she clung to Lady Annabel, pallid and shivering.

Her mother tenderly embraced her, she whispered to her words of great affection, she attempted to comfort and console her. Venetia murmured, "This is very foolish of me, mother; but speak, oh! speak of what I have so long desired to hear."

"Not now, Venetia!"

"Now, mother! yes, now! I am quite composed. I could not bear the postponement of what you were about to say. I could not sleep, dear mother, if you did not speak to me. It was only for a moment I was

overcome. See! I am quite composed." And she spoke in a calm and steady voice, but her pale and suffering countenance expressed the painful struggle which it cost her to command herself.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, "it has been one of the objects of my life, that you should not share my sorrows."

Venetia pressed her mother's hand, but made no other reply.

"I concealed from you for years," continued Lady Annabel, "a circumstance in which you were deeply interested, but the knowledge of which could only bring you unhappiness. Yet it was destined that my solicitude should eventually be baffled. I know that it is not from my lips that you learn for the first time that you have a father — a father living."

"Mother, let me tell you all!" said Venetia, eagerly.

"I know all," said Lady Annabel.

"But, mother, there is something that you do not know; and now I would confess it."

"There is nothing that you can confess with which I am not acquainted, Venetia; and I feel assured, I have ever felt assured, that your only reason for concealment was a desire to save me pain."

"That, indeed, has ever been my only motive," replied Venetia, "for having a secret from my mother."

"In my absence from Cherbury, you entered the chamber," said Lady Annabel, very calmly. "In the delirium of your fever, I became acquainted with a circumstance which so nearly proved fatal to you."

Venetia's cheek turned scarlet.

"In that chamber you beheld the portrait of your father," continued Lady Annabel. "From our friend you learnt that your father was still living. That is all?" said Lady Annabel, inquiringly.

"No, not all, dear mother; not all. Lord Cadurcis reproached me at Cherbury with — with — with having such a father," she added, in a hesitating voice. "It was then I learnt — his misfortunes, mother; his misery."

"I thought that misfortunes, that misery, were the lot of your other parent," replied Lady Annabel, somewhat coldly.

"Not with my love," said Venetia, eagerly; "not with my love, mother. You have forgotten your misery in my love. Say so, say so, dearest mother." And Venetia threw herself on her knees before Lady Annabel, and looked up with earnestness in her face.

The expression of that countenance had been for a moment stern, but it relaxed into fondness, as Lady Annabel gently bowed her head, and pressed her lips to her daughter's forehead. "Ah! Venetia," she said, "all depends upon you. I can endure, nay, I can forget the past, if my child be faithful to me. There are no misfortunes, there is no misery, if the being to whom I have consecrated the devotion of my life will only be dutiful, will only be guided by my advice, will only profit by my sad experience."

"Mother, I repeat I have no thought but for you," said Venetia. "My own dearest mother, if my duty, if

my devotion can content you, you shall be happy. But wherein have I failed?"

"In nothing, love. Your life has hitherto been one unbroken course of affectionate obedience."

"And ever shall be," said Venetia. "But you were speaking, mother, you were speaking of — of my — my father!"

"Of him!" said Lady Annabel, thoughtfully. "You have seen his picture?"

Venetia kissed her mother's hand.

"Was he less beautiful than Cadurcis? Was he less gifted?" exclaimed Lady Annabel, with animation. "He could whisper in tones as sweet, and pour out his vows as fervently. Yet what am I? O! my child," continued Lady Annabel, "beware of such beings! They bear within them a spirit on which all the devotion of our sex is lavished in vain. A year — no! not a year, not one short year! — and all my hopes were blighted! Oh! Venetia, if your future should be like my bitter past! — and it might have been, and I might have contributed to the fulfilment! — can you wonder that I should look upon Cadurcis with aversion?"

"But, mother, dearest mother, we have known Plantagenet from his childhood. You ever loved him; you ever gave him credit for a heart — most tender and affectionate."

"He has no heart."

"Mother!"

"He cannot have a heart. Spirits like him are heartless. It is another impulse that sways their ex-

istence. It is imagination; it is vanity; it is self, disguised with glittering qualities that dazzle our weak senses, but selfishness, the most entire, the most concentrated. We knew him as a child, — ah! what can women know! We are born to love, and to be deceived. We saw him young, helpless, abandoned; — he moved our pity. We knew not his nature; then he was ignorant of it himself. But the young tiger, though cradled at our hearths and fed on milk, will in good time retire to its jungle and prey on blood. You cannot change its nature; and the very hand that fostered it will be its first victim."

"How often have we parted!" said Venetia, in a deprecating tone; "how long have we been separated! and yet we find him ever the same; he ever loves us. Yes! dear mother, he loves you now, the same as in old days. If you had seen him, as I have seen him, weep when he recalled your promise to be a parent to him, and then contrasted with such sweet hopes your present reserve, oh! you would believe he had a heart, you would, indeed!"

"Weep!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, bitterly, "ay! they can weep. Sensibility is a luxury which they love to indulge. Their very susceptibility is our bane. They can weep; they can play upon our feelings: and our emotion, so easily excited, is an homage to their own power, in which they glory.

"Look at Cadurcis," she suddenly resumed; "bred with so much care; the soundest principles instilled into him with such sedulousness; imbibing them appa-

rently with so much intelligence, ardour, and sincerity, with all that fervour, indeed, with which men of his temperament for the moment pursue every object; but a few years back, pious, dutiful, and moral, viewing perhaps with intolerance too youthful all that differed from the opinions and the conduct he had been educated to admire and follow. And what is he now? The most lawless of the wild; casting to the winds every salutary principle of restraint and social discipline, and glorying only in the abandoned energy of self. Three years ago, you yourself confess to me, he reproached you with your father's conduct; now he emulates it. There is a career which such men must run, and from which no influence can divert them; it is in their blood. To-day Cadurcis may vow to you eternal devotion; but, if the world speak truth, Venetia, a month ago he was equally enamoured of another — and one, too, who cannot be his. But grant that his sentiments towards you are for the moment sincere; his imagination broods upon your idea, it transfigures it with a halo which exists only to his vision. Yield to him; become his bride; and you will have the mortification of finding that, before six months have elapsed, his restless spirit is already occupied with objects which may excite your mortification, your disgust, even your horror!"

"Ah! mother, it is not with Plantagenet as with my father; Plantagenet could not forget Cherbury, he could not forget our childhood," said Venetia.

"On the contrary, while you lived together these recollections would be wearisome, common-place to him;

when you had separated, indeed, mellowed by distance, and the comparative vagueness with which your absence would invest them, they would become the objects of his muse, and he would insult you by making the public the confidant of all your most delicate domestic feelings."

Lady Annabel rose from her seat, and walked up and down the room, speaking with an excitement very unusual with her. "To have all the soft secrets of your life revealed to the coarse wonder of the gloating multitude; to find yourself the object of the world's curiosity — still worse, their pity, their sympathy; to have the sacred conduct of your hearth canvassed in every circle, and be the grand subject of the pros and cons of every paltry journal, — ah! Venetia, you know not, you cannot understand, it is impossible you can comprehend, the bitterness of such a lot."

"My beloved mother!" said Venetia, with streaming eyes, "you cannot have a feeling that I do not share."

"Venetia, you know not what I had to endure!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, in a tone of extreme bitterness. "There is no degree of wretchedness that you can conceive equal to what has been the life of your mother. And what has sustained me — what, throughout all my tumultuous troubles, has been the star on which I have ever gazed? — My child! And am I to lose her now, after all my sufferings, all my hopes that she at least might be spared my miserable doom! Am I to witness her also a victim!" Lady Annabel clasped her hands in passionate grief.

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed Venetia, in agony, "spare yourself, spare me!"

"Venetia, you know how I have doated upon you; you know how I have watched and tended you from infancy. Have I had a thought, a wish, a hope, a plan? — has there been the slightest action of my life, of which you have not been the object? All mothers feel, but none ever felt like me: you were my solitary joy."

Venetia leant her face upon the table at which she was sitting, and sobbed aloud.

"My love was baffled," Lady Annabel continued, "I fled, for both our sakes, from the world in which my family were honoured; — I sacrificed without a sigh, in the very prime of my youth, every pursuit which interests woman; but I had my child — I had my child!"

"And you have her still!" exclaimed the miserable Venetia. "Mother, you have her still!"

"I have schooled my mind," continued Lady Annabel, still pacing the room with agitated steps; "I have disciplined my emotions; I have felt at my heart the constant, the undying pang, and yet I have smiled, that you might be happy. But I can struggle against my fate no longer. No longer can I suffer my unparalleled, — yes, my unjust doom. What have I done to merit these afflictions? — Now, then, let me struggle no more; let me die!"

Venetia tried to rise; her limbs refused their office;

she tottered; she fell again into her seat with an hysteric cry.

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, "to a mother, a child is everything; but to a child, a parent is only a link in the chain of her existence. It was weakness, it was folly, it was madness to stake everything on a resource which must fail me. I feel it now, but I feel it too late."

Venetia held forth her arms; she could not speak; she was stifled with her emotion.

"But was it wonderful that I was so weak?" continued her mother, as it were communing only with herself. "What child was like mine? Oh! the joy, the hours of rapture that I have passed, in gazing upon my treasure, and dreaming of all her beauty and her rare qualities! I was so happy! — I was so proud! Ah! Venetia, you know not how I have loved you!"

Venetia sprang from her seat; she rushed forward with convulsive energy; she clung to her mother, threw her arms round her neck, and buried her passionate woe in Lady Annabel's bosom.

Lady Annabel stood for some minutes supporting her speechless and agitated child; then, as her sobs became fainter, and the tumult of her grief gradually died away, she bore her to the sofa, and seated herself by her side, holding Venetia's hand in her own, and ever and anon soothing her with soft embraces, and still softer words.

At length, in a faint voice, Venetia said, "Mother,

what can I do to restore the past? How can we be to each other as we were, for this I cannot bear?"

"Love me, my Venetia, as I love you; be faithful to your mother; do not disregard her counsel; profit by her errors."

"I will in all things obey you," said Venetia, in a low voice; "there is no sacrifice I am not prepared to make, for your happiness."

"Let ut not talk of sacrifices, my darling child; it is not a sacrifice that I require. I wish only to prevent your everlasting misery."

"What, then, shall I do?"

"Make me only one promise; whatever pledge you give, I feel assured that no influence, Venetia, will ever induce you to forfeit it."

"Name it, mother."

"Promise me never to marry Lord Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, in a whisper, but a whisper of which not a word was lost by the person to whom it was addressed.

"I promise never to marry, but with your approbation," said Venetia, in a solemn voice, and uttering the words with great distinctness.

The countenance of Lady Annabel instantly brightened; she embraced her child with extreme fondness, and breathed the softest and the sweetest expressions of gratitude and love.

CHAPTER XV.

When Lady Monteagle discovered that of which her good-natured friends took care she should not long remain ignorant, — that Venetia Herbert had been the companion of Lord Cadurcis' childhood, and that the most intimate relations had once subsisted between the two families, — she became the prey of violent jealousy; and the bitterness of her feelings was not a little increased, when she felt that she had not only been abandoned, but duped; and that the new beauty, out of his fancy for whom she had flattered herself she had so triumphantly rallied him, was an old friend, whom he always admired. She seized the first occasion, after this discovery, of relieving her feelings, by a scene so violent, that Cadurcis had never again entered Monteagle House; and then repenting of this mortifying result, which she had herself precipitated, she overwhelmed him with letters, which, next to scenes, were the very things which Lord Cadurcis most heartily abhorred. These, — now indignant, now passionate, now loading him with reproaches, now appealing to his love, and now to his pity, — daily arrived at his residence, and were greeted at first only with short and sarcastic replies, and finally by silence. Then the lady solicited a final interview, and Lord Cadurcis having made an appointment to quiet her, went out of town the day before to Richmond, to a villa belonging to Venetia's uncle, and where, among other guests, he was of course to meet Lady Annabel and her daughter.

The party was a most agreeable one, and assumed an additional interest with Cadurcis, who had resolved to seize this favourable opportunity to bring his aspirations to Venetia to a crisis. The day after the last conversation with her, which we have noticed, he had indeed boldly called upon the Herberts at their hotel for that purpose, but without success, as they were again absent from home. He had been since almost daily in the society of Venetia; but London, to a lover who is not smiled upon by the domestic circle of his mistress, is a very unfavourable spot for confidential conversations. A villa life, with its easy, unembarrassed habits, its gardens and lounging walks, to say nothing of the increased opportunities resulting from being together at all hours, and living under the same roof, was more promising; and here he flattered himself he might defy even the Argus eye and ceaseless vigilance of his intended mother-in-law, his enemy, whom he could not propitiate, and whom he now fairly hated.

His cousin George, too, was a guest, and his cousin George was the confidant of his love. Upon this kind relation devolved the duty — far from a disagreeable one — of amusing the mother; and as Lady Annabel, though she relaxed not a jot of the grim courtesy which she ever extended to Lord Cadurcis, was no longer seriously uneasy as to his influence after the promise she had exacted from her daughter, it would seem that these circumstances combined to prevent Lord Cadurcis from being disappointed at least in the first object which he wished to obtain — an opportunity.

And yet several days elapsed before this offered itself, — passed by Cadurcis, however, very pleasantly in the presence of the being he loved, and very judiciously too, for no one could possibly be more amiable and ingratiating than our friend. Every one present, except Lady Annabel, appeared to entertain for him as much affection as admiration: those who had only met him in throngs were quite surprised how their superficial observation and the delusive reports of the world had misled them. As for his hostess, whom it had ever been his study to please, he had long won her heart; and, as she could not be blind to his projects and pretensions, she heartily wished him success, assisted him with all her efforts, and desired nothing more sincerely than that her niece should achieve such a conquest, and she obtain so distinguished a nephew.

Notwithstanding her promise to her mother, Venetia felt justified in making no alteration in her conduct to one whom she still sincerely loved; and, under the immediate influence of his fascination, it was often, when she was alone, that she mourned with a sorrowing heart over the opinion which her mother entertained of him. Could it indeed be possible that Plantagenet — the same Plantagenet she had known so early and so long, to her invariably so tender and so devoted — could entail on her, by their union, such unspeakable and inevitable misery? Whatever might be the view adopted by her mother of her conduct, Venetia felt every hour more keenly that it was a sacrifice, and the greatest; and she still indulged in a vague yet delicious dream,

that Lady Annabel might ultimately withdraw the harsh and perhaps heart-breaking interdict she had so rigidly decreed.

"Cadurcis," said his cousin to him one morning, "we are all going to Hampton Court. Now is your time; Lady Annabel, the Vernons, and myself, will fill one carriage; I have arranged that. Look out, and something may be done. Speak to the Countess."

Accordingly Lord Cadurcis hastened to make a suggestion to a friend always flattered by his notice. "My dear friend," he said in his softest tone, "let you and Venetia and myself manage to be together; it will be so delightful; we shall quite enjoy ourselves."

The Countess did not require this animating compliment to effect the object which Cadurcis did not express. She had gradually fallen into the unacknowledged conspiracy against her sister-in-law, whose prejudice against her friend she had long discovered, and had now ceased to combat. Two carriages, and one filled as George had arranged, accordingly drove gaily away; and Venetia, and her aunt, and Lord Cadurcis, were to follow them on horseback. They rode with delight through the splendid avenues of Bushey, and Cadurcis was never in a lighter or happier mood.

The month of May was in its decline, and the cloudless sky and the balmy air such as suited so agreeable a season. The London season was approaching its close; for the royal birthday was, at the period of our history, generally the signal of preparation for country quarters. The carriages arrived long before

the riding party, for they had walked their steeds, and they found a messenger who requested them to join their friends in the apartments which they were visiting.

"For my part," said Cadurcis, "I love the sun that rarely shines in this land. I feel no inclination to lose the golden hours in these gloomy rooms. What say you, ladies fair, to a stroll in the gardens? It will be doubly charming after our ride."

His companions cheerfully assented, and they walked away, congratulating themselves on their escape from the wearisome amusement of palace-hunting, straining their eyes to see pictures hung at a gigantic height, and solemnly wandering through formal apartments full of state beds and massy cabinets and modern armour.

Taking their way along the terrace, they struck at length into a less formal path. At length the Countess seated herself on a bench. "I must rest," she said, "but you, young people, may roam about; only do not lose me."

"Come, Venetia!" said Lord Cadurcis.

Venetia was hesitating; she did not like to leave her aunt alone, but the Countess encouraged her, "If you will not go, you will only make me continue walking," she said. And so Venetia proceeded, and for the first time since her visit was alone with Plantagenet.

"I quite love your aunt," said Lord Cadurcis.

"It is difficult indeed not to love her," said Venetia.

"Ah! Venetia, I wish your mother was like your

aunt," he continued. It was an observation which was not heard without some emotion by his companion, though it was imperceptible. "Venetia," said Cadurcis, "when I recollect old days, how strange it seems that we now never should be alone, but by some mere accident, like this, for instance."

"It is no use thinking of old days," said Venetia.

"No use!" said Cadurcis. "I do not like to hear you say that, Venetia. Those are some of the least agreeable words that were ever uttered by that mouth. I cling to old days; they are my only joy and my only hope."

"They are gone," said Venetia.

"But may they not return?" said Cadurcis.

"Never," said Venetia, mournfully.

They had walked on to a marble fountain of gigantic proportions and elaborate workmanship, an assemblage of divinities and genii, all spouting water in fantastic attitudes.

"Old days," said Plantagenet, "are like the old fountain at Cadurcis, dearer to me than all this modern splendour."

"The old fountain at Cadurcis," said Venetia, musingly, and gazing on the water with an abstracted air, "I loved it well!"

"Venetia," said her companion, in a tone of extreme tenderness, yet not untouched with melancholy, "dear Venetia, let us return, and return together, to that old fountain and those old days!"

Venetia shook her head. "Ah! Plantagenet," she

exclaimed in a mournful voice, "we must not speak of these things."

"Why, not, Venetia?" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, eagerly. "Why should we be estranged from each other? I love you; I love only you; never have I loved another. And you — have you forgotten all our youthful affection? You cannot, Venetia. Our childhood can never be a blank."

"I told you, when first we met, my heart was unchanged," said Venetia, in a very serious tone.

"Remember the vows I made to you when last at Cherbury," said Cadurcis. "Years have flown on, Venetia; but they find me urging the same. At any rate, now I know myself; at any rate, I am not now an obscure boy; yet what is manhood, and what is fame, without the charm of my infancy and my youth! Yes! Venetia, you must — you will be mine?"

"Plantagenet," she replied, in a solemn tone, "yours I never can be."

"You do not, then, love me?" said Cadurcis reproachfully, and in a voice of great feeling.

"It is impossible for you to be loved more than I love you," said Venetia.

"My own Venetia!" said Cadurcis; "Venetia that I dote on! what does this mean? Why, then, will you not be mine?"

"I cannot; there is an obstacle — an insuperable obstacle."

"Tell it me," said Cadurcis eagerly; "I will overcome it."

"I have promised never to marry without the approbation of my mother; her approbation you never can obtain."

Cadurcis' countenance fell; this was an obstacle which he felt that even he could not overcome.

"I told you your mother hated me, Venetia." And then, as she did not reply, he continued, "You confess it, I see you confess it. Once you flattered me I was mistaken; but now, now you confess it."

"Hatred is a word which I cannot understand," replied Venetia. "My mother has reasons for disapproving my union with you; not founded on the circumstances of your life, and therefore removable — for I know what the world says, Plantagenet, of you — but I have confidence in your love, and that is nothing; but founded on your character, on your nature; they may be unjust, but they are insuperable, and I must yield to them."

"You have another parent, Venetia," said Cadurcis, in a tone of almost irresistible softness, "the best and greatest of men! Once you told me that his sanction was necessary to your marriage. I will obtain it. O! Venetia, be mine, and we will join him; join that ill-fated and illustrious being who loves you with a passion second only to mine; him who has addressed you in language which rests on every lip, and has thrilled many a heart that you even can never know. My adored Venetia, picture to yourself, for one moment, a life with him; resting on my bosom, consecrated by his paternal love! Let us quit this mean and miserable

existence, which we now pursue, which never could have suited us; let us shun for ever this dull and degrading life, that is not life, if life be what I deem it; let us fly to those beautiful solitudes where he communes with an inspiring nature; let us — let us be happy!"

He uttered these last words in a tone of melting tenderness; he leant forward his head, and his gaze caught hers, which was fixed upon the water. Her hand was pressed suddenly in his; his eye glittered, his lip seemed still speaking; he awaited his doom.

The countenance of Venetia was quite pale, but it was disturbed. You might see, as it were, the shadowy progress of thought, and mark the tumultuous passage of conflicting passions. Her mind, for a moment, was indeed a chaos. There was a terrible conflict between love and duty. At length a tear, one solitary tear, burst from her burning eye-ball, and stole slowly down her cheek; it relieved her pain. She pressed Cadurcis' hand, and speaking in a hollow voice, and with a look vague and painful, she said, "I am a victim, but I am resolved. I never will desert her who devoted herself to me."

Cadurcis quitted her hand rather abruptly, and began walking up and down on the turf that surrounded the fountain.

"Devoted herself to you!" he exclaimed with a fiendish laugh, and speaking, as was his custom, between his teeth. "Commend me to such devotion. Not content with depriving you of a father, now forsooth

she must bereave you of a lover too! And this is a mother, a devoted mother! The cold-blooded, sullen, selfish, inexorable tyrant!"

"Plantagenet!" exclaimed Venetia with great animation.

"Nay, I will speak. Victim, indeed! You have ever been her slave. She a devoted mother! Ay! as devoted as a mother as she was dutiful as a wife! She has no heart; she never had a feeling. And she cajoles you with her love, her devotion — the stern hypocrite!"

"I must leave you," said Venetia; "I cannot bear this."

"Oh! the truth, the truth is precious," said Cadurcis, taking her hand, and preventing her from moving. "Your mother, your devoted mother, has driven one man of genius from her bosom, and his country. Yet there is another. Deny me what I ask, and to-morrow's sun shall light me to another land; to this I will never return; I will blend my tears with your father's, and I will publish to Europe the double infamy of your mother. I swear it solemnly. Still I stand here, Venetia; prepared, if you will but smile upon me, to be her son, her dutiful son. Nay! her slave like you. She shall not murmur. I will be dutiful; she shall be devoted; we will all be happy," he added in a softer tone. "Now, now, Venetia, my happiness is on the stake, now, now."

"I have spoken," said Venetia. "My heart may break, but my purpose shall not falter."

"Then my curse upon your mother's head!" said Cadurcis, with terrible vehemency. "May Heaven rain all its plagues upon her! The Hecate!"

"I will listen no more," exclaimed Venetia indignantly, and she moved away. She had proceeded some little distance when she paused and looked back; Cadurcis was still at the fountain, but he did not observe her. She remembered his sudden departure from Cherbury, she did not doubt that, in the present instance, he would leave them as abruptly, and that he would keep his word so solemnly given. Her heart was nearly breaking, but she could not bear the idea of parting in bitterness with the being whom, perhaps, she loved best in the world. She stopt, she called his name in a voice low indeed, but in that silent spot it reached him. He joined her immediately, but with a slow step. When he had reached her, he said, without any animation and in a frigid tone, "I believe you called me?"

Venetia burst into tears. "I cannot bear to part in anger, Plantagenet. I wished to say farewell in kindness. I shall always pray for your happiness. God bless you, Plantagenet!"

Lord Cadurcis made no reply, though for a moment he seemed about to speak; he bowed, and as Venetia approached her aunt, he turned his steps in a different direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENETIA stopped for a moment to collect herself before she joined her aunt, but it was impossible to conceal her agitation from the Countess. They had not, however, been long together before they observed their friends in the distance, who had now quitted the palace. Venetia made the utmost efforts to compose herself, and not unsuccessful ones. She was sufficiently calm on their arrival, to listen, if not to converse. The Countess, with all the tact of a woman, covered her niece's confusion by her animated description of their agreeable ride, and their still more pleasant promenade; and in a few minutes the whole party were walking back to their carriages. When they had arrived at the inn, they found Lord Cadurcis, to whose temporary absence the Countess had alluded with some casual observation which she flattered herself was very satisfactory. Cadurcis appeared rather sullen, and the Countess, with feminine quickness, suddenly discovered that both herself and her niece were extremely fatigued, and that they had better return in the carriages. There was one vacant place, and some of the gentlemen must ride outside. Lord Cadurcis, however, said that he should return as he came, and the grooms might lead back the ladies' horses: and so in a few minutes the carriages had driven off.

Our solitary equestrian, however, was no sooner mounted than he put his horse to its speed, and never drew in his rein until he reached Hyde Park Corner.

The rapid motion accorded with his tumultuous mood. He was soon at home, gave his horse to a servant, for he had left his groom behind, rushed into his library, tore up a letter of Lady Monteagle's with a demoniac glance, and rang his bell with such force that the rope broke. His valet, not unused to such ebullitions, immediately appeared.

"Has anything happened, Spalding?" said his lordship.

"Nothing particular, my lord. Her ladyship sent every day, and called herself twice, but I told her your lordship was in Yorkshire."

"That was right; I saw a letter from her. When did it come?"

"It has been here several days, my lord."

"Mind, I am at home to nobody; I am not in town."

The valet bowed and disappeared. Cadurcis threw himself into an easy chair, stretched his legs, sighed, and then swore; then suddenly starting up, he seized a mass of letters that were lying on the table, and hurled them to the other end of the apartment, dashed several books to the ground, kicked down several chairs that were in his way, and began pacing the room with his usual troubled step; and so he continued until the shades of twilight entered his apartment. Then he pulled down the other bell-rope, and Mr. Spalding again appeared.

"Order post-horses for to-morrow," said his lordship.

"Where to, my lord?"

"I don't know; order the horses."

Mr. Spalding again bowed and disappeared.

In a few minutes he heard a great stamping and confusion in his master's apartment, and presently the door opened and his master's voice was heard calling him repeatedly in a very irritable tone.

"Why are there no bells in this cursed room?" inquired Lord Cadurcis.

"The ropes are broken, my lord."

"Why are they broken?"

"I can't say, my lord."

"I cannot leave this house for a day but I find everything in confusion. Bring me some Burgundy."

"Yes, my lord. There is a young lad, my lord, called a few minutes back, and asked for your lordship. He says he has something very particular to say to your lordship. I told him your lordship was out of town. He said your lordship would wish very much to see him, and that he had come from the Abbey."

"The Abbey!" said Cadurcis, in a tone of curiosity. "Why did you not show him in?"

"Your lordship said you were not at home to anybody."

"Idiot! Is this anybody? Of course I would have seen him. What the devil do I keep you for, sir? You seem to me to have lost your head."

Mr. Spalding retired.

"The Abbey! that is droll," said Cadurcis. "I owe some duties to the poor Abbey. I should not

like to quit England, and leave anybody in trouble at the Abbey. I wish I had seen the lad. Some son of a tenant who has written to me, and I have never opened his letters. I am sorry."

In a few minutes Mr. Spalding again entered the room. "The young lad has called again, my lord. He says he thinks your lordship has come to town, and he wishes to see your lordship very much.

"Bring lights and show him up. Show him up first."

Accordingly, a country lad was ushered into the room, although it was so dusk that Cadurcis could only observe his figure standing at the door.

"Well, my good fellow," said Cadurcis; "what do you want? Are you in any trouble?"

The boy hesitated.

"Speak out, my good fellow; do not be alarmed. If I can serve you, or any one at the Abbey, I will do it."

Here Mr. Spalding entered with the lights. The lad held a cotton handkerchief to his face; he appeared to be weeping; all that was seen of his head were his locks of red hair. He seemed a country lad, dressed in a long green coat with silver buttons, and he twirled in his disengaged hand a peasant's white hat.

"That will do, Spalding," said Lord Cadurcis. "Leave the room. Now my good fellow, my time is precious, but speak out, and do not be afraid."

"Cadurcis!" said the lad in a sweet and trembling voice.

"Gertrude, by G—d!" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, starting. "What infernal masquerade is this?"

"Is it a greater disguise than I have to bear every hour of my life?" exclaimed Lady Monteagle, advancing. "Have I not to bear a smiling face with a breaking heart!"

"By Jove! a scene," exclaimed Cadurcis in a piteous tone.

"A scene!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle, bursting into a flood of indignant tears. "Is this the way the expression of my feelings is ever to be stigmatised! Barbarous man!"

Cadurcis stood with his back to the fire-place, with his lips compressed, and his hands under his coat-tails. He was resolved that nothing should induce him to utter a word. He looked the picture of dogged indifference.

"I know where you have been," continued Lady Monteagle. "You have been to Richmond; you have been with Miss Herbert. Yes! I know all. I am a victim, but I will not be a dupe. Yorkshire indeed! Paltry coward!"

Cadurcis hummed an air.

"And this is Lord Cadurcis!" continued the lady. "The sublime, ethereal Lord Cadurcis, condescending to the last refuge of the meanest, most commonplace mind, a vulgar, wretched lie! What could have been expected from such a mind? You may delude the world, but I know you. Yes! Sir; I know you. And I will let everybody know you. I will tear away the

veil of charlatanism with which you have enveloped yourself. The world shall at length discover the nature of the idol they have worshipped. All your meanness, all your falsehood, all your selfishness, all your baseness, shall be revealed. I may be spurned, but at any rate I will be revenged!"

Lord Cadurcis yawned.

"Insulting, pitiful wretch!" continued the lady. "And you think that I wish to hear you speak! You think the sound of that deceitful voice has any charm for me! You are mistaken, Sir. I have listened to you too long. It was not to remonstrate with you that I resolved to see you. The tones of your voice can only excite my disgust. I am here to speak myself; to express to you the contempt, the detestation, the aversion, the scorn, the hatred, which I entertain for you!"

Lord Cadurcis whistled.

The lady paused; she had effected the professed purport of her visit; she ought now to have retired, and Cadurcis would most willingly have opened the door for her, and bowed her out of his apartment. But her conduct did not exactly accord with her speech. She intimated no intention of moving. Her courteous friend retained his position, and adhered to his policy of silence. There was a dead pause, and then Lady Monteagle, throwing herself into a chair, went into hysterics.

Lord Cadurcis, following her example, also seated himself, took up a book, and began to read.

The hysterics became fainter and fainter; they experienced all those gradations of convulsive noise with which Lord Cadurcis was so well acquainted; at length they subsided into sobs and sighs. Finally, there was again silence, now only disturbed by the sound of a page turned by Lord Cadurcis.

Suddenly the lady sprang from her seat, and firmly grasping the arm of Cadurcis, threw herself on her knees at his side.

"Cadurcis!" she exclaimed, in a tender tone, "do you love me?"

"My dear Gertrude," said Lord Cadurcis coolly, but rather regretting he had quitted his original and less assailable posture, "you know I like quiet women."

"Cadurcis, forgive me!" murmured the lady. "Pity me! Think only how miserable I am!"

"Your misery is of your own making," said Lord Cadurcis. "What occasion is there for any of these extraordinary proceedings? I have told you a thousand times that I cannot endure scenes. Female society is a relaxation to me; you convert it into torture. I like to sail upon a summer sea; and you always will insist upon a white squall."

"But you have deserted me!"

"I never desert any one," replied Cadurcis very calmly, raising her from her supplicating attitude, and leading her to a seat. "The last time we met, you banished me your presence, and told me never to speak to you again. Well, I obeyed your orders, as I always do."

"But I did not mean what I said," said Lady Monteagle.

"How should I know that?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"Your heart ought to have assured you," said the lady.

"The tongue is a less deceptive organ than the heart," replied her companion.

"Cadurcis," said the lady, looking at her strange disguise, "what do you advise me to do?"

"To go home; and if you like I will order my vis-a-vis for you directly," and he rose from his seat to give the order.

"Ah! you are sighing to get rid of me!" said the lady, in a reproachful, but still very subdued tone.

"Why, the fact is, Gertrude, I prefer calling upon you, to your calling upon me. When I am fitted for your society, I seek it: and, when you are good-tempered, always with pleasure; when I am not in the mood for it, I stay away. And when I am at home, I wish to see no one; — I have business now, and not very agreeable business. I am disturbed by many causes, and you could not have taken a step which could have given me greater annoyance than the strange one you have adopted this evening."

"I am sorry for it now," said the lady, weeping. "When shall I see you again?"

"I will call upon you to-morrow, and pray receive me with smiles."

"I ever will," said the lady, weeping plenteously. "It is all my fault; you are ever too good. There is

not in the world a kinder and more gentle being than yourself. I shall never forgive myself for this exposure."

"Would you like to take anything?" said Lord Cadurcis: "I am sure you must feel exhausted. You see I am drinking wine; it is my only dinner to-day, but I dare say there is some sal-volatile in the house; I dare say, when my maids go into hysterics, they have it!"

"Ah! mocker," said Lady Monteagle, "but I can pardon everything, if you will only let me see you."

"Au revoir! then," said his lordship; "I am sure the carriage must be ready. I hear it. Come Mr. Gertrude, settle your wig, — it is quite awry. By Jove! we might as well go to the Pantheon, as you are ready dressed. I have a domino." And so saying, Lord Cadurcis handed the lady to his carriage, and pressed her lightly by the hand, as he reiterated his promise of calling at Monteagle House the next day.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lord Cadurcis — unhappy at home, and wearied of the commonplace resources of society — had passed the night in every species of dissipation; his principal companion being that same young nobleman in whose company he had been when he first met Venetia at Ranelagh. The morn was nearly breaking when Cadurcis and his friend arrived at his door. They had

settled to welcome the dawn with a beaker of burnt Burgundy.

"Now, my dear Scrope," said Cadurcis, "now for quiet and philosophy. The laughter of those infernal women, the rattle of those cursed dice, and the oaths of those ruffians, are still ringing in my ears. Let us compose ourselves, and moralise."

Accustomed to their master's habits — who generally turned night into day — the household were all on the alert; a blazing fire greeted them, and his lordship ordered instantly a devil and the burnt Burgundy.

"Sit you down here, my Scrope; that is the seat of honour, and you shall have it. What is this — a letter? and marked 'Urgent' — and in a man's hand? It must be read. Some good fellow nabbed by a bailiff, or planted by his mistress. Signals of distress! We must assist our friends."

The flame of the fire fell upon Lord Cadurcis' face as he read the letter; he was still standing, while his friend was stretched out in his easy chair, and inwardly congratulating himself on his comfortable prospects. The countenance of Cadurcis did not change, but he bit his lip, and read the letter twice, and turned it over, but with a careless air; and then he asked what o'clock it was. The servant informed him, and left the room.

"Scrope," said Lord Cadurcis, very quietly, and still standing, "are you very drunk?"

"My dear fellow, I am as fresh as possible; you will see what justice I shall do to the Burgundy."

"'Burgundy to-morrow,' as the Greek proverb saith," observed Lord Cadurcis. "Read that."

His companion had the pleasure of perusing a challenge from Lord Monteagle, couched in no gentle terms, and requesting an immediate meeting.

"Well, I never heard anything more ridiculous in my life," said Lord Scrope. "Does he want satisfaction because you have planted her?"

"D—n her!" said Lord Cadurcis. "She has occasioned me a thousand annoyances, and now she has spoilt our supper. I don't know, though; he wants to fight quickly, — let us fight at once. I will send him a cartel now, and then we can have our Burgundy. You will go out with me, of course? Hyde Park, six o'clock, and short swords."

Lord Cadurcis accordingly sat down, wrote his letter, and dispatched it by Mr. Spalding to Monteagle House, with peremptory instructions to bring back an answer. The companions then turned to their devil.

"This is a bore, Cadurcis," said Lord Scrope.

"It is. I cannot say I am very valorous in a bad cause. I do not like to fight 'upon compulsion,' I confess. If I had time to screw my courage up, I dare say I should do it very well. I dare say, for instance, if ever I am publicly executed, I shall die game."

"God forbid!" said Lord Scrope. "I say, Cadurcis, I would not drink any Burgundy if I were you. I shall take a glass of cold water."

"Ah! you are only a second, and so you want to

cool your valour," said Cadurcis. "You have all the fun."

"But how came this blow-up?" inquired Lord Scrope. "Letters discovered — eh? Because I thought you never saw her now?"

"By Jove! my dear fellow, she has been the whole evening here masquerading it like a very vixen, as she is; and now she has committed us both. I have burnt her letters, without reading them, for the last month. Now I call that honourable; because, as I had no longer any claim on her heart, I would not think of trenching on her correspondence. But honour, what is honour in these dishonourable days? This is my reward. She contrived to enter my house this evening, dressed like a farmer's boy, and you may imagine what ensued; rage, hysterics, and repentance. I am sure if Monteagle had seen me, he would not have been jealous. I never opened my mouth, but, like a fool, sent her home in my carriage; and now I am going to be run through the body for my politeness."

In this light strain, — blended, however, with more decorous feeling on the part of Lord Scrope, — the young men conversed until the messenger's return, with Lord Monteagle's answer. In Hyde Park, in the course of an hour, himself and Lord Cadurcis, attended by their friends, were to meet.

"Well, there is nothing like having these affairs over," said Cadurcis; "and, to confess the truth, my dear Scrope, I should not much care if Monteagle were to despatch me to my fathers; for, in the whole

course of my miserable life, — and miserable, whatever the world may think, it has been, — I never felt much more wretched than I have during the last four-and-twenty hours. By Jove! do you know I was going to leave England this morning, and I have ordered my horses, too."

"Leave England!"

"Yes, leave England; and where I never intended to return."

"Well, you are the oddest person I ever knew, Cadurcis. I should have thought you the happiest person that ever existed. Everybody admires, everybody envies you. You seem to have everything that man can desire. Your life is a perpetual triumph."

"Ah! my dear Scrope, there is a skeleton in every house. If you knew all, you would not envy me."

"Well, we have not much time," said Lord Scrope, "have you any arrangements to make?"

"None. My property goes to George, who is my only relative, without the necessity of a will, otherwise I should leave everything to him, for he is a good fellow, and my blood is in his veins. Just you remember Scrope, that I will be buried with my mother. That is all; and now let us get ready."

The sun had just risen when the young men went forth, and the day promised to be as brilliant as the preceding one. Not a soul was stirring in the courtly quarter in which Cadurcis resided; even the last watchman had stolen to repose. They called a hackney coach at the first stand they reached, and were soon at

the destined spot. They were indeed before their time, and strolling by the side of the Serpentine, Cadurcis said, "Yesterday morning was one of the happiest of my life, Scrope, and I was in hopes that an event would have occurred in the course of the day, that might have been my salvation. If it had, by-the-bye, I should not have returned to town, and got into this cursed scrape. However, the gods were against me, and now I am reckless."

Now Lord Monteagle and his friend, who was Mr. Horace Pole, appeared. Cadurcis advanced, and bowed; Lord Monteagle returned his bow, stiffly, but did not speak. The seconds chose their ground, the champions disembarrassed themselves of their coats, and their swords crossed. It was a brief affair. After a few passes, Cadurcis received a slight wound in his arm, while his weapon pierced his antagonist in the breast. Lord Monteagle dropped his sword, and fell.

"You had better fly, Lord Cadurcis," said Mr. Horace Pole. "This is a bad business, I fear; we have a surgeon at hand, and he can help us to the coach that is waiting close by."

"I thank you, Sir, I never fly," said Lord Cadurcis; "and I shall wait here until I see your principal safely deposited in his carriage; he will have no objection to my friend, Lord Scrope, assisting him, who, by his presence to-day, has only fulfilled one of the painful duties that society imposes upon us."

The surgeon gave an unfavourable report of the wound, which he dressed on the field. Lord Monteagle

was then borne to his carriage, which was at hand, and Lord Scrope, the moment he had seen the equipage move slowly off, returned to his friend.

"Well, Cadurcis," he exclaimed, in an anxious voice, "I hope you have not killed him. What will you do now?"

"I shall go home, and await the result, my dear Scrope. I am sorry for you, for this may get you into trouble. For myself, I care nothing."

"You bleed!" said Lord Scrope.

"A scratch. I almost wish our lots had been the reverse. Come, Scrope, help me on with my coat. Yesterday I lost my heart, last night I lost my money, and perhaps to-morrow I shall lose my arm. It seems we are not in luck."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It has been well observed, that no spectacle is so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years, our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated

with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare, with great pride, the high standard of morals established in England, with the Parisian laxity. At length, our anger is satiated, — our victim is ruined, and heart-broken, — and our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

These observations of a celebrated writer, apply to the instance of Lord Cadurcis; he was the periodical victim, the scapegoat of English morality, sent into the wilderness with all the crimes and curses of the multitude on his head. Lord Cadurcis had certainly committed a great crime: not his intrigue with Lady Monteagle, for that surely was not an unprecedented offence; not his duel with her husband, for after all it was a duel in self-defence: and, at all events, divorces and duels, under any circumstances, would scarcely have excited or authorised the storm which was now about to burst over the late spoiled child of society. But Lord Cadurcis had been guilty of the offence which, of all offences, is punished most severely: — Lord Cadurcis had been overpraised. He had excited too warm an interest; and the public, with its usual justice, was resolved to chastise him for its own folly.

There are no fits of caprice so hasty and so violent as those of society. Society, indeed, is all passions and no heart. Cadurcis, in allusion to his sudden and singular success, had been in the habit of saying to his intimates, that he "woke one morning and found himself famous." He might now observe, "I woke one morning and found myself infamous." Before twenty-four hours had passed over his duel with Lord Monteagle, he found himself branded by every journal in London, as an unprincipled and unparalleled reprobate. The public, without waiting to think or even to inquire after the truth, instantly selected as genuine the most false and the most flagrant of the fifty libellous narratives that were circulated of the transaction. Stories, inconsistent with themselves, were all alike eagerly believed, and what evidence there might be for any one of them, the virtuous people, by whom they were repeated, neither cared nor knew. The public, in short, fell into a passion with their darling, and, ashamed of their past idolatry, nothing would satisfy them but knocking the divinity on the head.

Until Lord Monteagle, to the great regret of society, who really wished him to die in order that his antagonist might commit murder, was declared out of danger, Lord Cadurcis never quitted his house, and he was not a little surprised that scarcely a human being called upon him except his cousin, who immediately flew to his succour. George, indeed, would gladly have spared Cadurcis any knowledge of the storm that was raging against him, and which he flattered himself

would blow over before Cadurcis was again abroad; but he was so much with his cousin, and Cadurcis was so extremely acute and naturally so suspicious, that this was impossible. Moreover, his absolute desertion by his friends, and the invectives and the lampoons with which the newspapers abounded, and of which he was the subject, rendered any concealment out of the question, and poor George passed his life in running about contradicting falsehoods, stating truth, fighting his cousin's battles, and then reporting to him, in the course of the day, the state of the campaign.

Cadurcis, being a man of infinite sensibility, suffered tortures. He had been so habituated to panegyric, that the slightest criticism ruffled him, and now his works had suddenly become the subject of universal and outrageous attack; having lived only in a cloud of incense, he suddenly found himself in a pillory of moral indignation; his writings, his habits, his temper, his person, were all alike ridiculed and vilified. In a word, Cadurcis, the petted, idolized, spoiled Cadurcis, was enduring that charming vicissitude in a prosperous existence, styled a reaction; and a conqueror, who deemed himself invincible, suddenly vanquished, could scarcely be more thunderstruck or feel more impotently desperate.

The tortures of his mind, however, which this sudden change in his position and in the opinions of society, were of themselves competent to occasion to one of so impetuous and irritable a temperament, and

who ever magnified both misery and delight with all the creative power of a brooding imagination, were excited in his case even to the liveliest agony, when he reminded himself of the situation in which he was now placed with Venetia. All hope of ever obtaining her hand had now certainly vanished, and he doubted whether even her love could survive the quick occurrence, after his ardent vows, of this degrading and mortifying catastrophe. He execrated Lady Monteagle with the most heart-felt rage, and when he remembered that all this time the world believed him the devoted admirer of this vixen, his brain was stimulated almost to the verge of insanity. His only hope of the truth reaching Venetia was through the medium of his cousin, and he impressed daily upon Captain Cadurcis the infinite consolation it would prove to him, if he could contrive to make her aware of the real facts of the case. According to the public voice, Lady Monteagle at his solicitation had fled to his house, and remained there, and her husband forced his entrance into the mansion in the middle of the night, while his wife escaped disguised in Lord Cadurcis' clothes. She did not, however, reach Monteagle House in time enough to escape detection by her lord, who had instantly sought and obtained satisfaction from his treacherous friend. All the monstrous inventions of the first week had now subsided into this circumstantial and undoubted narrative; at least this was the version believed by those who had been Cadurcis' friends. They circulated the authentic tale with the most considerate assiduity,

and shook their heads, and said it was too bad, and that he must not be countenanced.

The moment Lord Monteagle was declared out of danger, Lord Cadurcis made his appearance in public. He walked into Brookes', and everybody seemed suddenly so deeply interested in the newspaper, that you might have supposed they had brought intelligence of a great battle, or a revolution, or a change of ministry at the least. One or two men spoke to him, who had never presumed to address him at any other time, and he received a faint bow from a very distinguished nobleman, who had ever professed for him the greatest consideration and esteem.

Cadurcis mounted his horse and rode down to the House of Lords. There was a debate of some public interest, and a considerable crowd was collected round the Peers' entrance. The moment Lord Cadurcis was recognised, the multitude began hooting. He was agitated, and grinned a ghastly smile at the rabble. But he dismounted, without further annoyance, and took his seat. Not a single peer of his own party spoke to him. The leader of the opposition, indeed, bowed to him, and, in the course of the evening, he received, from one or two more of his party, some formal evidences of frigid courtesy. The tone of his reception by his friends could not be concealed from the ministerial party. It was soon detected, and generally whispered, that Lord Cadurcis was cut. Nevertheless, he sat out the debate and voted. The house broke up. He felt lonely; his old friend, the Bishop

of —, who had observed all that had occurred, and who might easily have avoided him, came forward, however, in the most marked manner, and, in a tone which everybody heard, said, "How do you do, Lord Cadurcis? I am very glad to see you," shaking his hand cordially. This made a great impression. Several of the Tory Lords, among them Venetia's uncle, now advanced and saluted him. He received their advances with a haughty, but not disdainful, courtesy; but when his Whig friends, very confused, now hurried to encumber him with their assistance, he treated them with the scorn which they well deserved.

"Will you take a seat in my carriage home, Lord Cadurcis?" said his leader, for it was notorious that Cadurcis had been mobbed on his arrival.

"Thank you, my Lord," said Cadurcis, speaking very audibly, "I prefer returning as I came. We are really both of us such very unpopular personages, that your kindness would scarcely be prudent."

The house had been very full; there was a great scuffle and confusion as the peers were departing; the mob, now considerable, were prepared for the appearance of Lord Cadurcis, and their demeanour was menacing. Some shouted out his name; then it was repeated with odious and vindictive epithets, followed by ferocious yells. A great many peers collected round Cadurcis, and entreated him not to return on horseback. It must be confessed that very genuine and considerable feeling was now shown by all men of all parties. And indeed to witness this young, and noble, and

gifted creature, but a few days back the idol of the nation, and from whom a word, a glance even, was deemed the greatest and most gratifying distinction — whom all orders, classes, and conditions of men had combined to stimulate with multiplied adulation, — with all the glory and ravishing delights of the world, as it were, forced upon him, — to see him thus assailed with the savage execrations of all those vile things who exult in the fall of everything that is great, and the abasement of everything that is noble, was indeed a spectacle which might have silenced malice and satisfied envy!

"My carriage is heartily at your service, Lord Cadurcis," said the noble leader of the government in the upper house; "you can enter it without the slightest suspicion by these ruffians." — "Lord Cadurcis; my dear Lord; my good Lord — for our sakes, if not for your own — Cadurcis, dear Cadurcis, my good Cadurcis, it is madness, folly, insanity, — a mob will do anything, and an English mob is viler than all — for Heaven's sake!" Such were a few of the varied exclamations which resounded on all sides, but which produced on the person to whom they were addressed only the result of his desiring the attendant to call for his horses.

The lobby was yet full; it was a fine thing in the light of the archway to see Cadurcis spring into his saddle. Instantly there was a horrible yell. Yet in spite of all their menaces, the mob were for a time awed by his courage; they made way for him; he

might even have rode quickly on for some few yards, but he would not; he reined his fiery steed into a slow but stately pace, and, with a countenance scornful and composed, he continued his progress, apparently unconscious of impediment. Meanwhile, the hooting continued without abatement, increasing indeed, after the first comparative pause, in violence and menace. At length a bolder ruffian, excited by the uproar, rushed forward and seized Cadurcis' bridle. Cadurcis struck the man over the eyes with his whip, and at the same time touched his horse with his spur, and the assailant was dashed to the ground. This seemed a signal for a general assault. It commenced with hideous yells. His friends at the house, who had watched everything with the keenest interest, immediately directed all the constables who were at hand to rush to his succour; hitherto they had restrained the police, lest their interference might stimulate rather than repress the mob. The charge of the constables was well timed; they laid about them with their staves; you might have heard the echo of many a broken crown. Nevertheless, though they dispersed the mass, they could not penetrate the immediate barrier that surrounded Lord Cadurcis, whose only defence indeed, for they had cut off his groom, was the terrors of his horse's heels, and whose managed motions he regulated with admirable skill — now rearing, now prancing, now kicking behind, and now turning round with a quick yet sweeping motion, before which the mob retreated. Off his horse, however, they seemed resolved to drag him; and it was not diffi-

cult to conceive, if they succeeded, what must be his eventual fate. They were infuriate, but his contact with his assailants fortunately prevented their co-mates from hurling stones at him from the fear of endangering their own friends.

A messenger to the Horse Guards had been sent from the House of Lords; but, before the military could arrive, and fortunately — for, with their utmost expedition, they must have been too late — a rumour of the attack got current in the House of Commons. Captain Cadurcis, Lord Scrope, and a few other young men instantly rushed out; and, ascertaining the truth, armed with good cudgels and such other effective weapons as they could instantly obtain, they mounted their horses and charged the nearly-triumphant populace, dealing such vigorous blows that their efforts soon made a visible diversion in Lord Cadurcis' favour. It is very difficult, indeed, to convey an idea of the exertions and achievements of Captain Cadurcis; no Paladin of chivalry ever executed such marvels in a swarm of Paynim slaves; and many a bloody coxcomb and broken limb bore witness in Petty France that night to his achievements. Still the mob struggled and were not daunted by the delay in immolating their victim. As long as they had only to fight against men in plain clothes, they were valorous and obstinate enough; but the moment that the crests of a troop of Horse Guards were seen trotting down Parliament street, everybody ran away, and in a few minutes all Palace-yard was as still as if the genius of the place rendered a riot impossible.

Lord Cadurcis thanked his friends, who were profuse in their compliments to his pluck. His manner, usually playful with his intimates of his own standing, was, however, rather grave at present, though very cordial. He asked them home to dine with him; but they were obliged to decline his invitation, as a division was expected; so, saying "Good-bye, George, perhaps I shall see you to-night," Cadurcis rode rapidly off.

With Cadurcis there was but one step from the most exquisite sensitiveness to the most violent defiance. The experience of this day had entirely cured him of his previous nervous deference to the feelings of society. Society had outraged him, and now he resolved to outrage society. He owed society nothing; his reception at the House of Lords and the riot in Palace-yard had alike cleared his accounts with all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest. He had experienced, indeed, some kindness that he could not forget, but only from his own kin, and those who with his associations were the same as kin. His memory dwelt with gratification on his cousin's courageous zeal, and still more on the demonstration which Masham had made in his favour, which, if possible, argued still greater boldness and sincere regard. That was a trial of true affection, and an instance of moral courage, which Cadurcis honoured, and which he never could forget. He was anxious about Venetia; he wished to stand as well with her as he deserved; no better; but he was grieved to think she could believe all those in-

famous tales at present current respecting himself. But for the rest of the world, he delivered them all to the most absolute contempt, disgust, and execration; he resolved, from this time, nothing should ever induce him again to enter society, or admit the advances of a single civilized ruffian who affected to be social. The country, the people, their habits, laws, manners, customs, opinions, and everything connected with them, were viewed with the same jaundiced eye; and his only object now was to quit England, to which he resolved never to return.

CHAPTER XIX.

VENETIA was, perhaps, not quite so surprised as the rest of her friends, when, on their return to Richmond, Lord Cadurcis was not again seen. She was very unhappy: she recalled the scene in the garden at Cherbury some years back; and, with the knowledge of the impetuosity of his temper, she believed she should never see him again. Poor Plantagenet, who loved her so much, and whose love she so fully returned! why might they not be happy? She neither doubted the constancy of his affection, nor their permanent felicity if they were united. She shared none of her mother's apprehensions or her prejudices, but she was the victim of duty and her vow. In the course of four-and-twenty hours, strange rumours were afloat respecting Lord Cadurcis; and the newspapers on the ensuing morning told the truth, and more than the truth. Venetia could

not doubt as to the duel or the elopement; but, instead of feeling indignation, she attributed what had occurred to the desperation of his mortified mind; and she visited on herself all the fatal consequences that had happened. At present, however, all her emotions were quickly absorbed in the one terrible fear that Lord Monteagle would die. In that dreadful and urgent apprehension every other sentiment merged. It was impossible to conceal her misery, and she entreated her mother to return to town.

Very differently, however, was the catastrophe viewed by Lady Annabel. She, on the contrary, triumphed in her sagacity and her prudence. She hourly congratulated herself on being the saviour of her daughter; and though she refrained from indulging in any open exultation over Venetia's escape and her own profound discretion, it was, nevertheless, impossible for her to conceal from her daughter her infinite satisfaction and self-congratulation. While Venetia was half broken-hearted, her mother silently returned thanks to Providence for the merciful dispensation which had exempted her child from so much misery.

The day after their return to town, Captain Cadurcis called upon them. Lady Annabel never mentioned the name of his cousin; but George, finding no opportunity of conversing with Venetia alone, and being, indeed, too much excited to speak on any other subject, plunged at once into the full narrative; defended Lord Cadurcis, abused the Monteagles and the slanderous world, and, in spite of Lady Annabel's ill-

concealed dissatisfaction, favoured her with an exact and circumstantial account of everything that had happened — how it happened, when it happened, and where it happened; concluding by a declaration that Cadurcis was the best fellow that ever lived; the most unfortunate, and the most ill-used; and that, if he were to be hunted down for an affair like this, over which he had no control, there was not a man in London who could be safe for ten minutes. All that George effected by his zeal, was to convince Lady Annabel that his cousin had entirely corrupted him; she looked upon her former favourite as another victim; but Venetia listened in silence, and not without solace.

Two or three days after the riot at the House of Lords, Captain Cadurcis burst into his cousin's room with a triumphant countenance. "Well, Plantagenet!" he exclaimed, "I have done it: I have seen her alone, and I have put you as right as possible. Nothing can be better."

"Tell me, my dear fellow," said Lord Cadurcis, eagerly.

"Well, you know, I have called half-a-dozen times," said George, "but either Lady Annabel was there, or they were not at home, or something always occurred to prevent any private communication. But I met her to-day with her aunt; I joined them immediately, and kept with them the whole morning. I am sorry to say she, I mean Venetia, is devilish ill; she is, indeed. However, her aunt now is quite on your side, and very kind, I can tell you that. I put her right at first, and

she has fought our battle bravely. Well, they stopped to call somewhere, and Venetia was so unwell that she would not get out, and I was left alone in the carriage with her. Time was precious, and I opened at once. I told her how wretched you were, and that the only thing that made you miserable was about her, because you were afraid she would think you so profligate, and all that. I went through it all; told her the exact truth, which, indeed, she had before heard; but now I assured her, on my honour, that it was exactly what happened; and she said she did not doubt it, and could not, from some conversation which you had together the day we were all at Hampton Court, and that she felt that nothing could have been premeditated, and fully believed that everything had occurred as I said; and, however she deplored it, she felt the same for you as ever, and prayed for your happiness. Then she told me what misery the danger of Lord Monteagle had occasioned her; that she thought his death must have been the forerunner of her own; but the moment he was declared out of danger seemed the happiest hour of her life. I told her you were going to leave England, and asked her whether she had any message for you; and she said, 'Tell him he is the same to me that he has always been.' So, when her aunt returned, I jumped out and ran on to you at once."

"You are the best fellow that ever lived, George," said Lord Cadurcis; "and now the world may go to the devil!"

This message from Venetia acted upon Lord Ca-

durcis like a charm. It cleared his mind. He shut himself up in his house for a week, and wrote a farewell to England, perhaps the most masterly effusion of his powerful spirit. It abounded in passages of overwhelming passion, and almost Satanic sarcasm. Its composition entirely relieved his long-brooding brain. It contained, moreover, a veiled address to Venetia, — delicate, tender, and irresistibly affecting. He appended also to the publication, the verses he had previously addressed to her.

This volume, which was purchased with an avidity exceeding even the eagerness with which his former productions had been received, exercised extraordinary influence on public opinion. It enlisted the feelings of the nation on his side in a struggle with a coterie. It was suddenly discovered that Lord Cadurcis was the most injured of mortals, and far more interesting than ever. The address to the unknown object of his adoration, and the verses to Venetia, mystified everybody. Lady Monteagle was universally abused, and all sympathised with the long-treasured and baffled affection of the unhappy poet. Cadurcis, however, was not to be conciliated. He left his native shores in a blaze of glory, but with the accents of scorn still quivering on his lip.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

THE still waters of the broad and winding lake reflected the lustre of the cloudless sky. The gentle declinations of the green hills that immediately bordered the lake, with an undulating margin that now retired into bays of the most picturesque form, now jutted forth into woody promontories, and then opened into valleys of sequestered beauty, which the eye delighted to pursue, were studded with white villas, and cottages scarcely less graceful, and occasionally with villages, and even towns; here and there rose a solitary chapel; and, scarcely less conspicuous, the black spire of some cypress strikingly contrasting with the fair buildings or the radiant foliage that in general surrounded them. A rampart of azure mountains raised their huge forms behind the nearer hills; and occasionally peering over these, like spectres on some brilliant festival, were the ghastly visages of the Alpine glaciers.

It was within an hour of sunset, and the long shadows had fallen upon the waters; a broad boat, with a variegated awning, rowed by two men, approached the steps of a marble terrace. The moment they had

reached their point of destination, and had fastened the boat to its moorings, the men landed their oars, and immediately commenced singing a simple yet touching melody, wherewith it was their custom to apprise their employers of their arrival.

"Will they come forth this evening, think you, Vittorio?" said one boatman to the other.

"By our holy mother! I hope so," replied his comrade, "for this light air that is now rising will do the young Signora more good than fifty doctors."

"They are good people," said Vittorio. "It gives me more pleasure to row them than any persons who ever hired us."

"Ay, ay!" said his comrade, "it was a lucky day when we first put an oar in the lake for them, heretics though they be."

"But they may be converted yet," said his companion; "for, as I was saying to Father Francisco last night, if the young Signora dies, it is a sad thing to think what will become of her."

"And what said the good Father?"

"He shook his head," said Vittorio.

"When Father Francisco shakes his head, he means a great deal," said his companion.

At this moment a servant appeared on the terrace, to say the ladies were at hand; and very shortly afterwards Lady Annabel Herbert, with her daughter leaning on her arm, descended the steps, and entered the boat. The countenances of the boatmen brightened when they saw them, and they both made their in-

quiries after the health of Venetia with tenderness and feeling.

"Indeed, my good friends," said Venetia, "I think you are right, and the lake will cure me after all."

"The blessing of the lake be upon you, Signora," said the boatmen, crossing themselves.

Just as they were moving off, came running Mistress Pauncefort, quite breathless. "Miss Herbert's fur cloak, my lady; you told me to remember, my lady, and I cannot think how I forgot it. But I really have been so very hot all day, that such a thing as furs never entered my head. And for my part, until I travelled, I always thought furs were only worn in Russia. But live and learn, as I say."

They were now fairly floating on the calm, clear waters, and the rising breeze was as grateful to Venetia as the boatmen had imagined.

A return of those symptoms which had before so disquieted Lady Annabel for her daughter, and which were formerly the cause of their residence at Weymouth, had induced her, in compliance with the advice of her physicians, to visit Italy; but the fatigue of travel had exhausted the energies of Venetia — for in those days the Alps were not passed in luxurious travelling carriages — on the very threshold of the promised land; and Lady Annabel had been prevailed upon to take a villa on the Lago Maggiore, where Venetia had passed two months, still suffering indeed from great debility, but not without advantage.

There are few spots more favoured by nature than

the Italian lakes and their vicinity, combining, as they do, sublime features of mountain scenery with all the softer beauties and the varied luxuriance of the plain. As the still, bright lake is to the rushing and troubled cataract, is Italy to Switzerland and Savoy. Emerging from the chaotic ravines and the wild gorges of the Alps, the happy land breaks upon us like a beautiful vision. We revel in the sunny light, after the unearthly glare of eternal snow. Our sight seems renovated as we throw our eager glance over those golden plains, clothed with such picturesque trees, sparkling with such graceful villages, watered by such noble rivers, and crowned with such magnificent cities; and all bathed and beaming in an atmosphere so soft and radiant! Every isolated object charms us with its beautiful novelty: for the first time we gaze on palaces; the garden, the terrace, and the statue, recall our dreams beneath a colder sky; and we turn from these to catch the hallowed form of some cupola'd convent, crowning the gentle elevation of some green hill, and flanked by the cypress or the pine.

The influence of all these delightful objects and of this benign atmosphere on the frame and mind of Venetia had been considerable. After the excitement of the last year of her life, and the harassing and agitating scenes with which it closed, she found a fine solace in this fair land and this soft sky, which the sad perhaps can alone experience. Its repose alone afforded a consolatory contrast to the turbulent pleasure of the great world. She looked back upon those glittering

and noisy scenes with an aversion which was only modified by her self-congratulation at her escape from their exhausting and contaminating sphere. Here she recurred, but with all the advantages of a change of scene, and a scene so rich in novel and interesting associations, to the calm tenor of those days, when not a thought ever seemed to escape from Cherbury and its spell-bound seclusion. Her books, her drawings, her easel, and her harp, were now again her chief pursuits; pursuits, however, influenced by the genius of the land in which she lived, and therefore invested with a novel interest; for the literature and the history of the country naturally attracted her attention; and its fair aspects and sweet sounds, alike inspired her pencil and her voice. She had, in the society of her mother, indeed, the advantage of communing with a mind not less refined and cultivated than her own. Lady Annabel was a companion whose conversation, from reading and reflection, was eminently suggestive; and their hours, though they lived in solitude, never hung heavy. They were always employed, and always cheerful. But Venetia was not more than cheerful. Still very young, and gifted with an imaginative and therefore sanguine mind, the course of circumstances, however, had checked her native spirit, and shaded a brow which, at her time of life and with her temperament, should have been rather fanciful than pensive. If Venetia, supported by the disciplined energies of a strong mind, had schooled herself into not looking back to the past with grief, her future was certainly not tinged with the Iris pencil of

Hope. It seemed to her that it was her fate that life should bring her no happier hours than those she now enjoyed. They did not amount to exquisite bliss. That was a conviction which, by no process of reflection, however ingenious, could she delude herself to credit. Venetia struggled to take refuge in content, a mood of mind perhaps less natural than it should be to one so young, so gifted, and so fair!

Their villa was surrounded by a garden in the ornate and artificial style of the country. A marble terrace overlooked the lake, crowned with many a statue and vase that held the aloe. The laurel and the cactus, the cypress and the pine, filled the air with their fragrance, or charmed the eye with their rarity and beauty: the walks were festooned with the vine, and they could raise their hands and pluck the glowing fruit which screened them from the beam by which it was ripened. In this enchanted domain Venetia might be often seen — a form even fairer than the sculptured nymphs among which she glided — catching the gentle breeze that played upon the surface of the lake, or watching the white sail that glittered in the sun as it floated over its purple bosom.

Yet this beautiful retreat Venetia was soon to quit, and she thought of her departure with a sigh. Her mother had been warned to avoid the neigbourhood of the mountains in the winter, and the autumn was approaching its close. If Venetia could endure the passage of the Apennines, it was the intention of Lady Annabel to pass the winter on the coast of the Medi-

terranean; otherwise to settle in one of the Lombard cities. At all events, in the course of a few weeks they were to quit their villa on the lake.

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after this excursion on the lake, Lady Annabel and her daughter were both surprised and pleased with a visit from a friend whose appearance was certainly unexpected; this was Captain Cadurcis. On his way from Switzerland to Sicily, he had heard of their residence in the neighbourhood, and had crossed over from Arona to visit them.

The name of Cadurcis was still dear to Venetia, and George had displayed such gallantry and devotion in all his cousin's troubles, that she was personally attached to him; he had always been a favourite of her mother; his arrival, therefore, was welcomed by each of the ladies with great cordiality. He accepted the hospitality which Lady Annabel offered him, and remained with them a week, a period which they spent in visiting the most beautiful and interesting spots of the lake, with which they were already sufficiently familiar to allow them to prove guides as able as they were agreeable. These excursions contributed to the pleasure and happiness of the whole party. There was about Captain Cadurcis a natural cheerfulness which animated every one in his society; a gay simplicity, difficult to define, but charming, and which, without effort, often produced deeper impressions than more

brilliant and subtle qualities. Left alone in the world, and without a single advantage save those that nature had conferred upon him, it had often been remarked, that in whatever circle he moved George Cadurcis always became the favourite and everywhere made friends. His sweet and engaging temper had perhaps as much contributed to his professional success as his distinguished gallantry and skill. Other officers, no doubt, were as brave and able as Captain Cadurcis, but his commanders always signalled him out for favourable notice: and strange to say, his success, instead of exciting envy and ill-will, pleased even his less fortunate competitors. However hard another might feel his own lot, it was soothed by the reflection that George Cadurcis was at least more fortunate. His popularity, however, was not confined to his profession. His cousin's noble guardian, whom George had never seen until he ventured to call upon his lordship on his return to England, now looked upon him almost as a son, and omitted no opportunity of advancing his interests in the world. Of all the members of the House of Commons he was perhaps the only one that everybody praised, and his success in the world of fashion had been as remarkable as in his profession. These great revolutions in his life and future prospects had, however, not produced the slightest change in his mind and manners; and this was perhaps the secret spell of his prosperity. Though we are most of us the creatures of affectation, simplicity has a great charm, especially when attended, as in the present instance, with many agreeable and some noble

qualities. In spite of the rough fortunes of his youth, the breeding of Captain Cadurcis was high; the recollection of the race to which he belonged had never been forgotten by him. He was proud of his family. He had one of those light hearts, too, which enable their possessors to acquire accomplishments with facility: he had a sweet voice, a quick ear, a rapid eye. He acquired a language, as some men learn an air. Then his temper was imperturbable, and although the most obliging and kindest-hearted creature that ever lived, there was a native dignity about him which prevented his good nature from being abused. No sense of interest either could ever induce him to act contrary to the dictates of his judgment and his heart. At the risk of offending his patron, George sided with his cousin, although he had deeply offended his guardian, and although the whole world was against him. Indeed, the strong affection that Lord Cadurcis instantly entertained for George is not the least remarkable instance of the singular, though silent, influence that Captain Cadurcis everywhere acquired. Lord Cadurcis had fixed upon him for his friend from the first moment of their acquaintance, and though apparently there could not be two characters more dissimilar, there were at bottom some striking points of sympathy and some strong bonds of union, in the generosity and courage that distinguished both, and in the mutual blood that filled their veins.

There seemed to be a tacit understanding between the several members of our party that the name of

Lord Cadurcis was not to be mentioned. Lady Annabel made no inquiry after him; Venetia was unwilling to hazard a question which would annoy her mother, and of which the answer could not bring her much satisfaction; and Captain Cadurcis did not think fit himself to originate any conversation on the subject. Nevertheless, Venetia could not help sometimes fancying, when her eyes met his, that their mutual thoughts were the same, and both dwelling on one who was absent, and of whom her companion would willingly have conversed. To confess the truth, indeed, George Cadurcis was on his way to join his cousin, who had crossed over from Spain to Barbary, and journeyed along the African coast from Tangiers to Tripoli. Their point of reunion was to be Sicily or Malta. Hearing of the residence of the Herberts on the lake, he thought it would be but kind to Plantagenet to visit them; and perhaps to bear to him some message from Venetia. There was nothing, indeed, on which Captain Cadurcis was more intent than to effect the union between his cousin and Miss Herbert. He was deeply impressed with the sincerity of Plantagenet's passion, and he himself entertained for the lady the greatest affection and admiration. He thought she was the only person whom he had ever known, who was really worthy to be his cousin's bride. And, independent of her personal charms and undoubted talents, she had displayed during the outcry against Lord Cadurcis, so much good sense, such a fine spirit, and such modest yet sincere affection for the victim, that George Ca-

durcis had almost lost his own heart to her, when he was endeavouring to induce her not utterly to reject that of another; and it became one of the dreams of his life, that in a little time, when all, as he fondly anticipated, had ended as it should, and as he wished it, he should be able to find an occasional home at Cadurcis Abbey, and enjoy the charming society of one whom he had already taught himself to consider as a sister.

"And to-night you must indeed go?" said Venetia, as they were walking together on the terrace. It was the only time that they had been alone together during his visit.

"I must start from Arona at daybreak," replied George; "and I must travel quickly; for in less than a month I must be in Sicily."

"Sicily! Why are you going to Sicily?"

Captain Cadurcis smiled. "I am going to join a friend of ours," he answered.

"Plantagenet?" she said.

Captain Cadurcis nodded assent.

"Poor Plantagenet!" said Venetia.

"His name has been on my lips several times," said George.

"I am sure of that," said Venetia. "Is he well?"

"He writes to me in fair spirits," said Captain Cadurcis. "He has been travelling in Spain, and now he is somewhere in Africa; we are to meet in Sicily or Malta. I think travel has greatly benefited him. He seems delighted with his glimpse of Oriental manners;

and I should scarcely be surprised if he were now to stretch on to Constantinople."

"I wonder if he will ever return to England," said Venetia thoughtfully.

"There is only one event that would induce him," said Captain Cadurcis. And then after a pause he added, "You will not ask me what it is?"

"I wish he were in England, and were happy," said Venetia.

"It is in your power to effect both results," said her companion.

"It is useless to recur to that subject," said Venetia. "Plantagenet knows my feelings towards him, but fate has forbidden our destinies to be combined."

"Then he will never return to England, and never be happy. Ah! Venetia, what shall I tell him when we meet? What message am I to bear him from you?"

"Those regards which he ever possessed, and has never forfeited," said Venetia.

"Poor Cadurcis!" said his cousin, shaking his head, "if any man ever had reason to be miserable, it is he."

"We are none of us very happy, I think," said Venetia mournfully. "I am sure when I look back to the last few years of my life it seems to me that there is some curse hanging over our families. I cannot penetrate it; it baffles me."

"I am sure," said Captain Cadurcis with great animation: "nay, I would pledge my existence cheerfully on the venture, that if Lady Annabel would only re-

lent towards Cadurcis, we should all be the happiest people in the world."

"Heigho!" said Venetia. "There are other cares in our house besides our unfortunate acquaintance with your cousin. We were the last people in the world with whom he should ever have become connected."

"And yet it was an intimacy that commenced auspiciously," said her friend, "I am sure I have sat with Cadurcis, and listened to him by the hour, while he has told me of all the happy days at Cherbury when you were both children; the only happy days, according to him, that he ever knew."

"Yes! they were happy days," said Venetia.

"And what connection could have offered a more rational basis for felicity than your union?" he continued. "Whatever the world may think, I, who know Cadurcis to the very bottom of his heart, feel assured that you never would have repented for an instant becoming the sharer of his life; your families were of equal rank, your estates joined, he felt for your mother the affection of a son. There seemed every element that could have contributed to earthly bliss. As for his late career, you who know all have already, have always indeed, viewed it with charity. Placed in his position, who could have acted otherwise? I know very well that his genius, which might recommend him to another woman, is viewed by your mother with more than apprehension. It is true that a man of his exquisite sensibility requires sympathies as refined to command his nature. It is no common mind that could

maintain its hold over Cadurcis, and his spirit could not yield but to rare and transcendent qualities. He found them, Venetia, he found them in her whom he had known longest and most intimately, and loved from his boyhood. Talk of constancy, indeed! who has been so constant as my cousin? No, Venetia, you may think fit to bow to the feelings of your mother, and it would be impertinence in me to doubt for an instant the propriety of your conduct: I do not doubt it; I admire it; I admire you, and everything you have done; none can view your behaviour throughout all these painful transactions with more admiration, I might even say with more reverence, than myself; but, Venetia, you never can persuade me, you have never attempted to persuade me, that you yourself are incredulous of the strength and permanency of my cousin's love."

"Ah! George, you are our friend!" said Venetia, a tear stealing down her cheek. "But, indeed, we must not talk of these things. As for myself, I think not of happiness. I am certain I am not born to be happy. I wish only to live calmly; contentedly, I would say; but that, perhaps, is too much. My feelings have been so harrowed, my mind so harassed, during these last few years, and so many causes of pain and misery seem ever hovering round my existence, that I do assure you, my dear friend, I have grown old before my time. Ah! you may smile, George, but my heart is heavy; it is indeed."

"I wish I could lighten it," said Captain Cadurcis.

"I fear I am somewhat selfish in wishing you to marry my cousin, for then you know I should have a permanent and authentic claim to your regard. But no one, at least I think so, can feel more deeply interested in your welfare than I do. I never knew any one like you, and I always tell Cadurcis so, and that I think makes him worse, but I cannot help it."

Venetia could not refrain from smiling at the simplicity of this confession.

"Well," continued her companion, "everything, after all, is for the best. You and Plantagenet are both very young; I live in hopes that I shall yet see you Lady Cadurcis."

Venetia shook her head, but was not sorry that their somewhat melancholy conversation should end in a livelier vein. So they entered the villa.

The hour of parting was painful; and the natural gaiety of Captain Cadurcis deserted him. He had become greatly attached to the Herberts. Without any female relatives of his own, their former intimacy and probable connection with his cousin had taught him to look upon them in some degree in the light of kindred. He had originally indeed become acquainted with them in all the blaze of London society, not very calculated to bring out the softer tints and more subdued tones of our character, but even then the dignified grace of Lady Annabel and the radiant beauty of Venetia, had captivated him, and he had cultivated their society with assiduity and extreme pleasure. The grand crisis of his cousin's fortunes had enabled him to become in-

timate with the more secret and serious qualities of Venetia, and from that moment he had taken the deepest interest in everything connected with her. His happy and unexpected meeting in Italy had completed the spell; and now that he was about to leave them, uncertain even if they should ever meet again, his soft heart trembled, and he could scarcely refrain from tears as he pressed their hands, and bade them his sincere adieus.

The moon had risen ere he entered his boat, and flung a rippling line of glittering light on the bosom of the lake. The sky was without a cloud, save a few thin fleecy vapours that hovered over the azure brow of a distant mountain. The shores of the lake were suffused with the serene effulgence, and every object was so distinct, that the eye was pained by the lights of the villages, that every instant became more numerous and vivid. The bell of a small chapel on the opposite shore, and the distant chant of some fishermen still working at their nets, were the only sounds that broke the silence which they did not disturb. Reclined in his boat, George Cadurcis watched the vanishing villa of the Herberts, until the light in the principal chamber was the only sign that assured him of its site. That chamber held Venetia; the unhappy Venetia! He covered his face with his hand when even the light of her chamber vanished, and, full of thoughts tender and disconsolate, he at length arrived at Arona.

CHAPTER III.

PURSUANT to their plans, the Herberts left the Lago Maggiore towards the end of October, and proceeded by gentle journeys to the Apennines. Before they crossed this barrier, they were to rest awhile in one of the Lombard cities; and now they were on the point of reaching Arquâ, which Venetia had expressed a strong desire to visit.

At the latter part of the last century, the race of tourists, the offspring of a long peace, and the rapid fortunes made during the war, did not exist. Travelling was then confined to the aristocracy, and though the English, when opportunity offered, have ever been a restless people, the gentle bosom of the Euganean Hills was then rarely disturbed amid its green and sequestered valleys.

There is not perhaps in all the Italian region, fertile as it is in interesting associations and picturesque beauty, a spot that tradition and nature have so completely combined to hallow, as the last residence of Petrarch. It seems, indeed, to have been formed for the retirement of a pensive and poetic spirit. It recedes from the world by a succession of delicate acclivities clothed with vineyards and orchards, until, winding within these hills, the mountain hamlet is at length discovered, enclosed by two ridges that slope towards each other, and seem to shut out all the passions of a troubled race. The houses are scattered at intervals on the

steep sides of these summits, and on a little knoll is the mansion of the poet, built by himself, and commanding a rich and extensive view, that ends only with the shores of the Adriatic sea. His tomb, a sarcophagus of red marble, supported by pillars, doubtless familiar to the reader, is at hand; and placed on an elevated site, gives a solemn impression to a scene, of which the character would otherwise be serenely cheerful.

Our travellers were surprised to find that the house of the poet was inhabited by a very different tenant from the rustic occupier they had anticipated. They heard that a German gentleman had within the last year fixed upon it as the residence of himself and his wife. The peasants were profuse in their panegyrics of this visitor, whose arrival had proved quite an era in the history of their village. According to them, a kinder and more charitable gentleman never breathed; his whole life was spent in studying and contributing to the happiness of those around him. The sick, the sorrowful, and the needy, were ever sure of finding a friend in him, and merit a generous patron. From him came portions to the portionless; no village maiden need despair of being united to her betrothed, while he could assist her; and at his own cost he had sent to the academy of Bologna, a youth whom his father would have made a cowherd, but whom nature predisposed to be a painter. The inhabitants believed this benevolent and generous person was a physician, for he attended the sick, prescribed for their complaints,

and had once even performed an operation with great success. It seemed, that since Petrarch no one had ever been so popular at Arquâ as this kind German. Lady Annabel and Venetia were interested with the animated narratives of the ever-active beneficence of this good man, and Lady Annabel especially regretted that his absence deprived her of the gratification of becoming acquainted with a character so rare and so invaluable. In the meantime, they availed themselves of the offer of his servants to view the house of Petrarch, for their master had left orders, that his absence should never deprive a pilgrim from paying his homage to the shrine of genius.

The house, consisting of two floors, had recently been repaired by the present occupier. It was simply furnished. The ground floor was allotted to the servants. The upper story contained five rooms, three of which were of good size, and two closets. In one of these were the traditionary chair and table of Petrarch, and here, according to their guides, the master of the house passed a great portion of his time in study, to which, by their account, he seemed devoted. The adjoining chamber was his library; its windows opened on a balcony looking on two lofty and conical hills, one topped with a convent, while the valley opened on the side and spread into a calm and very pleasant view. Of the other apartments, one served as a saloon, but there was nothing in it remarkable, except an admirably painted portrait of a beautiful woman, which the servant informed them was their mistress.

"But that surely is not a German physiognomy?" said Lady Annabel.

"The mistress is an Italian," replied the servant.

"She is very handsome, of whatever nation she may be," replied Lady Annabel.

"Oh! how I should have liked to have met these happy people, mamma," said Venetia, "for happy they surely must be."

"They seem to be good people," said Lady Annabel. "It really lightened my heart to hear of all this gentleman's kind deeds."

"Ah! if the Signora only knew the master," said their guide, "she would indeed know a good man."

They descended to the garden, which certainly was not like the garden of their villa; it had been but lately a wilderness of laurels, but there were evidences that the eye and hand of taste were commencing its restoration with effect.

"The master did this," said their guide. "He will allow no one to work in the garden but himself. It is a week since he went to Bologna, to see our Paulo. He gained a prize at the academy, and his father begged the master to be present when it was conferred on him; he said it would do his son so much good! So the master went, though it is the only time he has quitted Quâ since he came to reside here."

"And how long has he resided here?" inquired Venetia.

"'Tis the second autumn," said the guide, "and he came in the spring. If the Signora would only wait,

we expect the master home to-night or to-morrow, and he would be glad to see her."

"We cannot wait, my friend," said Lady Annabel, rewarding the guide; "but you will thank your master in our names, for the kindness we have experienced. You are all happy in such a friend."

"I must write my name in Petrarch's house," said Venetia. "Adieu! happy Arquâ! Adieu! happy dwellers in this happy valley!"

CHAPTER IV.

Just as Lady Annabel and her daughter arrived at Rovigo, one of those sudden and violent storms that occasionally occur at the termination of an Italian autumn raged with irresistible fury. The wind roared with a noise that overpowered the thunder; then came a rattling shower of hail, with stones as big as pigeons' eggs, succeeded by rain, not in showers, but literally in cataracts. The only thing to which a tempest of rain in Italy can be compared, is the bursting of a water-spout. Venetia could scarcely believe that this could be the same day of which the golden morning had found her among the sunny hills of Arquâ. This unexpected vicissitude induced Lady Annabel to alter her plans, and she resolved to rest at Rovigo, where she was glad to find that they could be sheltered in a commodious inn.

The building had originally been a palace, and in its halls and galleries, and the vast octagonal vestibule on

which the principal apartments opened, it retained many noble indications of the purposes to which it was formerly destined. At present, a lazy innkeeper who did nothing; his bustling wife, who seemed equally at home in the saloon, the kitchen, and even the stable; and a solitary waiter, were the only inmates, except the Herberts, and a travelling party, who had arrived shortly after them, and who, like them, had been driven by stress of weather to seek refuge at a place where otherwise they had not intended to remain.

A blazing fire of pine wood soon gave cheerfulness to the vast and somewhat desolate apartment into which our friends had been ushered; their sleeping-room was adjoining, but separated. In spite of the lamentations of Pauncefort, who had been drenched to the skin, and who required much more waiting upon than her mistress, Lady Annabel and Venetia at length produced some degree of comfort. They drew the table near the fire; they ensconced themselves behind an old screen; and, producing their books and work notwithstanding the tempest they contrived to domesticate themselves at Rovigo.

"I cannot help thinking of Arquâ and its happy tenants, mamma," said Venetia.

"And yet perhaps they may have their secret sorrows," said Lady Annabel. "I know not why, I always associate seclusion with unhappiness."

Venetia remembered Cherbury. Their life at Cherbury was like the life of the German at Arquâ. A chance visitor to Cherbury in their absence, viewing

the beautiful residence and the fair domain, and listening to the tales which they well might hear of all her mother's grace and goodness, might perhaps too envy its happy occupiers. But were they happy? Had they no secret sorrows? Was their seclusion associated with unhappiness? These were reflections that made Venetia grave; but she opened her journal, and, describing the adventures and feelings of the morning, she dissipated some mournful reminiscences.

The storm still raged, Venetia had quitted the saloon in which her mother and herself had been sitting, and had repaired to the adjoining chamber to fetch a book. The door of this room opened, as all the other entrances of the different apartments, on to the octagonal vestibule. Just as she was quitting the room, and about to return to her mother, the door of the opposite chamber opened, and there came forward a gentleman in a Venetian dress of black velvet. His stature was considerably above the middle height, though his figure, which was remarkably slender, was bowed — not by years certainly, for his countenance, though singularly emaciated, still retained traces of youth. His hair, which he wore very long, descended over his shoulders, and must originally have been of a light golden colour, but now was severely touched with grey. His countenance was very pallid, so colourless indeed that its aspect was almost unearthly; but his large blue eyes, that were deeply set in his majestic brow, still glittered with fire, and their expression alone gave life to a visage, which, though beautiful in its

outline, from its faded and attenuated character seemed rather the countenance of a corpse than of a breathing being.

The glance of the stranger caught that of Venetia, and seemed to fascinate her. She suddenly became motionless; wildly she stared at the stranger, who, in his turn, seemed arrested in his progress, and stood still as a statue, with his eyes fixed with absorbing interest on the beautiful apparition before him. An expression of perplexity and pain flitted over the amazed features of Venetia; and then it seemed that, by some almost supernatural effort, confusion amounting to stupefaction suddenly brightened and expanded into keen and overwhelming intelligence. Exclaiming in a frenzied tone, "My father!" Venetia sprang forward, and fell senseless on the stranger's breast.

Such, after so much mystery, so many aspirations, so much anxiety, and so much suffering, such was the first meeting of Venetia Herbert with her father!

Marmion Herbert, himself trembling and speechless, bore the apparently lifeless Venetia into his apartment. Not permitting her for a moment to quit his embrace, he seated himself, and gazed silently on the inanimate and unknown form he held so strangely within his arms. Those lips, now closed as if in death, had uttered however one word which thrilled to his heart, and still echoed, like a supernatural annunciation, within his ear. He examined with an eye of agitated scrutiny the fair features no longer sensible of his presence. He gazed upon that transparent brow, as if he would read

some secret in its pellucid veins; and touched those long locks of golden hair, with a trembling finger, that seemed to be wildly seeking for some vague and miraculous proof of inexpressible identity. The fair creature had called him "Father." His dreaming reveries had never pictured a being half so beautiful! She called him "Father!" The word had touched his brain, as lightning cuts a tree. He looked around him with a distracted air, then gazed on the tranced form he held with a glance which would have penetrated her soul, and murmured unconsciously the wild word she had uttered. She called him "Father!" He dared not think who she might be. His thoughts were wandering in a distant land; visions of another life, another country, rose before him, troubled and obscure. Baffled aspirations, and hopes blighted in the bud, and the cherished secrets of his lorn existence, clustered like clouds upon his perplexed, yet creative, brain. She called him "Father!" It was a word to make him mad. "Father!" This beautiful being had called him "Father," and seemed to have expired, as it were, in the irresistible expression. His heart yearned to her; he had met her embrace with an inexplicable sympathy; her devotion had seemed, as it were, her duty and his right. Yet who was she? He was a father. It was a fact — a fact alike full of solace and mortification — the consciousness of which never deserted him. But he was the father of an unknown child — to him the child of his poetic dreams, rather than his reality. And now there came this radiant

creature, and called him "Father!" Was he awake, and in the harsh busy world; or was it the apparition of an over-excited imagination, brooding too constantly on one fond idea, on which he now gazed so fixedly? Was this some spirit? Would that she would speak again! Would that those sealed lips would part and utter but one word — would but again call him "Father," and he asked no more!

"Father!" — to be called "Father" by one whom he could not name, by one over whom he mused in solitude, by one to whom he had poured forth all the passion of his desolate soul; to be called "Father" by this being was the aspiring secret of his life. He had painted her to himself in his loneliness, he had conjured up dreams of ineffable loveliness, and inexpressible love; he had led with her an imaginary life of thrilling tenderness; he had indulged in a delicious fancy of mutual interchange of the most exquisite offices of our nature; and then, when he had sometimes looked around him, and found no daughter there, no beaming countenance of purity to greet him with its constant smile, and receive the quick and ceaseless tribute of his vigilant affection, the tears had stolen down his lately-excited features, all the consoling beauty of his visions had vanished into air, he had felt the deep curse of his desolation, and had anathematised the cunning brain that made his misery a thousand-fold keener by the mockery of its transporting illusions.

And now there came this transcendent creature, with a form more glowing than all his dreams; a voice

more musical than a seraphic chorus, though it had uttered but one thrilling word: there came this transcendent creature, beaming with grace, beauty, and love, and had fallen upon his heart, and called him "Father!"

Herbert looked up to heaven as if waiting for some fresh miracle to terminate the harrowing suspense of his tortured mind; Herbert looked down upon his mysterious companion; the rose was gradually returning to her cheek, her lips seemed to tremble with reviving breath. There was only one word more strange to his ear than that which she had uttered, but an irresistible impulse sent forth the sound.

"Venetia!" he exclaimed.

The eyes of the maiden slowly opened; she stared around her with a vague glance of perplexity, not unmingled with pain; she looked up; she caught the rapt gaze of her father, bending over her with fondness yet with fear; his lips moved, for a moment they refused to articulate, yet at length they again uttered — "Venetia!" And the only response she made was to cling to him with nervous energy, and hide her face in his bosom.

Herbert pressed her to his heart. Yet even now he hesitated to credit the incredible union. Again he called her by her name, but added with rising confidence, "My Venetia!"

"Your child, your child," she murmured. "Your own Venetia."

He pressed his lips to hers; he breathed over her

a thousand blessings; she felt his tears trickling on her neck.

At length Venetia looked up and sighed; she was exhausted by the violence of her emotion: her father relaxed his grasp with infinite tenderness, watching her with delicate solicitude; she leaned her arm upon his shoulder with downcast eyes.

Herbert gently took her disengaged hand, and pressed it to his lips. "I am as in a dream," murmured Venetia.

"The daughter of my heart has found her sire," said Herbert in an impassioned voice. "The father who has long lived upon her fancied image; the father, I fear, she has been bred up to hate."

"Oh! no, no," said Venetia, speaking rapidly and with a slight shiver, "not hate; it was a secret, his name was never mentioned; it was unknown."

"A secret! My existence a secret from my child, my beautiful, fond child!" exclaimed Herbert in a tone even more desolate than bitter. "Why did they not let you at least hate me!"

"My father!" said Venetia, in a firmer voice, and with returning animation, yet gazing around her with a still distracted air. "Am I with my father? The clouds clear from my brain. I remember that we met. Where was it? Was it at Arquâ? In the garden? I am with my father!" she continued in a rapid tone, and with a wild smile. "Oh! let me look on him!" and she turned round, and gazed upon Herbert with a serious scrutiny. "Are you my father?" she continued, in a

still, small voice. "Your hair has grown grey since last I saw you; it was golden then, like mine. I know you are my father," she added, after a pause, and in a tone almost of gaiety. "You cannot deceive me. I know your name. They did not tell it me; I found it out myself, but it made me very ill, very; and I do not think I have ever been quite well since. You are Marmion Herbert. My mother had a dog called Marmion, when I was a little girl, but I did not know I had a father then."

"Venetia!" exclaimed Herbert, with streaming eyes, as he listened with anguish to these incoherent sentences. "My Venetia loves me!"

"Oh! she always loved you," replied Venetia; "always, always. Before she knew her father she loved him. I dare say you think I do not love you, because I am not used to speak to a father. Everything must be learnt, you know," she said, with a faint, sad smile; "and then it was so sudden! I do not think my mother knows it yet. And after all, though I found you out in a moment, still, I know not why, I thought it was a picture. But I read your verses, and I knew them by heart at once; but now my memory has worn out, for I am ill, and everything has gone cross with me. And all because my father wrote me verses. 'Tis very strange, is not it?"

"Sweet lamb of my affections," exclaimed Herbert to himself, "I fear me much this sudden meeting with one from whose bosom you ought never to have been

estranged, has been for the moment too great a trial for this delicate brain."

"I will not tell my mother," said Venetia; "she will be angry."

"Your mother, darling, where is your mother?" said Herbert, looking, if possible, paler than he was wont.

"She was at Arquâ with me, and on the lake for months, but where we are now, I cannot say. If I could only remember where we are now," she added with earnestness, and with a struggle to collect herself, "I should know everything."

"This is Rovigo, my child, the inn of Rovigo. You are travelling with your mother. Is it not so?"

"Yes! and we came this morning, and it rained. Now I know everything," said Venetia, with an animated and even cheerful air.

"And we met in the vestibule, my sweet," continued Herbert, in a soothing voice; "we came out of opposite chambers, and you knew me; my Venetia knew me. Try to tell me, my darling," he added, in a tone of coaxing fondness, "try to remember how Venetia knew her father."

"He was so like his picture at Cherbury," replied Venetia.

"Cherbury!" exclaimed Herbert, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Only your hair has grown grey, dear father; but it is long, quite as long as in your picture."

"Her dog called Marmion!" murmured Herbert to

himself, "and my portrait, too! You saw your father's portrait, then, every day, love?"

"Oh, no!" said Venetia, shaking her head, "only once, only once. And I never told mamma. It was where no one could go, but I went there one day. It was in a room that no one ever entered except mamma, but I entered it. I stole the key, and had a fever, and in my fever I confessed all. But I never knew it. Mamma never told me I confessed it, until many, many years afterwards. It was the first, the only time she ever mentioned to me your name, my father."

"And she told you to shun me, to hate me? She told you I was a villian, a profligate, a demon? eh? eh? 'Was it not so, Venetia?"

"She told me that you had broken her heart," said Venetia; "and she prayed to God that her child might not be so miserable."

"Oh! my Venetia," exclaimed Herbert, pressing her to his breast, and in a voice stifled with emotion, "I feel, now, we might have been happy!"

In the meantime, the prolonged absence of her daughter surprised Lady Annabel. At length she rose, and walked into their adjoining apartment, but to her surprise Venetia was not there. Returning to her saloon, she found Pauncefort and the waiter arranging the table for dinner.

"Where is Miss Herbert, Pauncefort?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"I am sure, my lady, I cannot say. I have no doubt she is in the other room."

"She is not there, for I have just quitted it," replied Lady Annabel. "How very strange! You have not seen the Signora?" inquired Lady Annabel, of the waiter.

"The Signora is in the room with the gentleman."

"The Gentleman!" exclaimed Lady Annabel. "Tell me, good man, what do you mean? I am inquiring for my daughter."

"I know well the Signora is talking of her daughter," replied the waiter.

"But do you know my daughter by sight? Surely you must mean some one else."

"Do I know the Signora's daughter!" said the waiter. "The beautiful young lady, with hair like Santa Marguerita, in the church of the Holy Trinity! I tell the Signora, I saw her carried into numero 4, in the arms of the Signor Forestiere, who arrived this morning."

"Venetia is ill," said Lady Annabel. "Show me to the room, my friend."

Lady Annabel accordingly, with a hurried step, following her guide, quitted the chamber. Pauncefort remained fixed to the earth, the very picture of perplexity.

"Well, to be sure!" she exclaimed, "was anything ever so strange! In the arms of Signor Forestiere! Forestiere! An English name. There is no person of the name of Forest that I know. And in his arms, too! I should not wonder if it was my lord after all. Well, I should be glad if he were to come to light

again, for, after all, my lady may say what she likes, but if Miss Venetia don't marry Lord Cadurcis, I must say marriages were never made in heaven!"

CHAPTER V.

The waiter threw open the door of Mr. Herbert's chamber, and Lady Annabel swept in with a majesty she generally assumed when about to meet strangers. The first thing she beheld was her daughter in the arms of a man, whose head was bent, and who was embracing her. Notwithstanding this astounding spectacle, Lady Annabel neither started nor screamed; she only said in an audible tone, and one rather expressing astonishment than agitation, "Venetia!"

Immediately the stranger looked up, and Lady Annabel beheld her husband!

She was rooted to the earth. She turned deadly pale; for a moment her countenance expressed only terrór, but the terror quickly changed into aversion. Suddenly she rushed forward, and exclaimed in a tone in which decision conquered dismay, "Restore me my child!"

The moment Herbert had recognised his wife, he had dexterously disengaged himself from the grasp of Venetia, whom he left on the chair, and meeting Lady Annabel with extended arms, that seemed to deprecate her wrath, he said, "I seek not to deprive you of her; she is yours and she is worthy of you; but respect for

a few moments the feelings of a father who has met his only child in a manner so unforeseen."

The presence of her mother instantaneously restored Venetia to herself. Her mind was in a moment cleared and settled. Her past and peculiar life, and all its incidents, recurred to her with their accustomed order, vividness, and truth. She thoroughly comprehended her present situation. Actuated by long-cherished feelings and the necessity of the occasion, she rose and threw herself at her mother's feet and exclaimed, "O! mother, he is my father, love him!"

Lady Annabel stood with an averted countenance, Venetia clinging to her hand, which she had caught when she rushed forward, and which now fell passive by Lady Annabel's side, giving no sign, by any pressure or motion, of the slightest sympathy with her daughter, or feeling for the strange and agonising situation in which they were both placed.

"Annabel," said Herbert, in a voice that trembled, though the speaker struggled to appear calm, "be charitable! I have never intruded upon your privacy; I will not now outrage it. Accident or some diviner motive has brought us together this day. If you will not treat me with kindness, look not upon me with aversion before our child."

Still she was silent and motionless, her countenance hidden from her husband and her daughter, but her erect and haughty form betokening her inexorable mind. "Annabel," said Herbert, who had now withdrawn to some distance, and leant against a pillar,

"will not then nearly twenty years of desolation purchase one moment of intercourse! I have injured you. Be it so. This is not the moment I will defend myself. But have I not suffered? Is not this meeting a punishment deeper even than your vengeance could devise? Is it nothing to behold this beautiful child, and feel that she is only yours? Annabel, look on me, look on me only one moment! My frame is bowed, my hair is grey, my heart is withered; the principle of existence waxes faint and slack in this attenuated frame. I am no longer that Herbert on whom you once smiled, but a man stricken with many sorrows. The odious conviction of my life cannot long haunt you; yet a little while, and my memory will alone remain. Think of this, Annabel, I beseech you think of it. Oh! believe me, when the speedy hour arrives that will consign me to the grave, where I shall at least find peace, it will not be utterly without satisfaction that you will remember that we met if even by accident, and parted at least not with harshness!"

"Mother, dearest mother!" murmured Venetia, "speak to him, look on him!"

"Venetia," said her mother, without turning her head, but in a calm, firm tone, "your father has seen you, has conversed with you. Between your father and myself there can be nothing to communicate, either of fact or feeling. Now let us depart."

"No, no, not depart!" said Venetia franticly. "You did not say depart, dear mother! I cannot go," she added in a low and half hysterical voice.

"Desert me then," said the mother. "A fitting consequence of your private communications with your father," she added in a tone of bitter scorn; and Lady Annabel moved to depart, but Venetia, still kneeling, clung to her convulsively.

"Mother, mother, you shall not go; you shall not leave me; we will never part, mother," continued Venetia, in a tone almost of violence, as she perceived her mother give no indication of yielding to her wish. "Are my feelings then nothing?" she then exclaimed. "Is this your sense of my fidelity? Am I for ever to be a victim?" She loosened her hold of her mother's hand, her mother moved on, Venetia fell upon her forehead and uttered a faint scream. The heart of Lady Annabel relented when she fancied her daughter suffered physical pain, however slight; she hesitated, she turned, she hastened to her child; her husband had simultaneously advanced; in the rapid movement and confusion her hand touched that of Herbert.

"I yield her to you, Annabel," said Herbert, placing Venetia in her mother's arms. "You mistake me, as you have often mistaken me, if you think I seek to practise on the feelings of this angelic child. She is yours; may she compensate you for the misery I have caused you, but never sought to occasion!"

"I am not hurt, dear mother," said Venetia, as her mother tenderly examined her forehead. "Dear, dear mother, why did you reproach me?"

"Forget it," said Lady Annabel, in a softened tone; "for indeed you are irreproachable."

"O! Annabel," said Herbert, "may not this child be some atonement — this child, of whom I solemnly declare I would not deprive you, though I would willingly forfeit my life for a year of her affection; and your — your sufferance," he added.

"Mother! speak to him," said Venetia, with her head on her mother's bosom, who still, however, remained rigidly standing. But Lady Annabel was silent.

"Your mother was ever stern and cold, Venetia," said Herbert, the bitterness of his heart at length expressing itself.

"Never," said Venetia, with great energy, "never; you know not my mother. Was she stern and cold when she visited each night in secret your portrait?" said Venetia, looking round upon her astonished father, with her bright grey eye. "Was she stern and cold when she wept over your poems — those poems whose characters your own hand had traced? Was she stern and cold when she hung a withered wreath on your bridal bed, the bed to which I owe my miserable being? Oh! no, my father; sad was the hour of separation for my mother and yourself. It may have dimmed the lustre of her eye, and shaded your locks with premature grey, but whatever may have been its inscrutable cause, there was one victim of that dark hour, less thought of than yourselves, and yet a greater sufferer than both, the being in whose heart you implanted affections whose unfulfilled tenderness has made that wretched thing they call your daughter."

"Annabel!" exclaimed Herbert, rapidly advancing, with an imploring gesture, and speaking in a tone of infinite anguish, "Annabel, Annabel, even now we can be happy!"

The countenance of his wife was troubled, but its stern expression had disappeared. The long-concealed yet at length irrepressible emotion of Venetia had touched her heart. In the conflict of affection between the claims of her two parents, Lady Annabel had observed with a sentiment of sweet emotion, in spite of all the fearfulness of the meeting, that Venetia had not faltered in her devotion to her mother. The mental torture of her child touched her to the quick. In the excitement of her anguish, Venetia had expressed a profound sentiment, the irresistible truth of which Lady Annabel could no longer withstand. She had too long and too fondly schooled herself to look upon the outraged wife as the only victim. There was then, at length it appeared to this stern-minded woman, another. She had laboured in the flattering delusion that the devotion of a mother's love might compensate to Venetia for the loss of that other parent, which in some degree Lady Annabel had occasioned her; for the worthless husband, had she chosen to tolerate the degrading connection, might nevertheless have proved a tender father. But Nature, it seemed, had shrunk from the vain effort of the isolated mother. The seeds of affection for the father of her being were mystically implanted in the bosom of his child. Lady Annabel recalled the harrowing hours that this attempt by her

to curb and control the natural course and rising sympathies of filial love had cost her child, on whom she had so vigilantly practised it. She recalled her strange aspirations, her inspired curiosity, her brooding reveries, her fitful melancholy, her terrible illness, her resignation, her fidelity, her sacrifices — there came across the mind of Lady Annabel a mortifying conviction that the devotion to her child, on which she had so rated herself, might after all only prove a subtle form of profound selfishness; and that Venetia, instead of being the idol of her love, might eventually be the martyr of her pride. And, thinking of these things, she wept.

This evidence of emotion, which in such a spirit Herbert knew how to estimate, emboldened him to advance; he fell on one knee before her and her daughter; gently he stole her hand, and pressed it to his lips. It was not withdrawn, and Venetia laid her hand upon theirs, and would have bound them together had her mother been relentless. It seemed to Venetia that she was at length happy, but she would not speak, she would not disturb the still and silent bliss of the impending reconciliation. Was it then indeed at hand? In truth, the deportment of Herbert throughout the whole interview, so delicate, so subdued, so studiously avoiding the slightest rivalry with his wife in the affections of their child, and so carefully abstaining from attempting in the slightest degree to control the feelings of Venetia, had not been lost upon Lady Annabel. And when she thought of him, so changed from what he had been, grey, bent, and careworn, with all the

lustre that had once so fascinated her, faded, and talking of that impending fate which his wan though spiritual countenance too clearly intimated, her heart melted.

Suddenly the door burst open, and there stalked into the room a woman of eminent but graceful stature, and of a sovereign and voluptuous beauty. She was habited in the Venetian dress; her dark eyes glittered with fire, her cheek was inflamed with no amiable emotion, and her long black hair was disordered by the violence of her gesture.

"And who are these?" she exclaimed in a shrill voice.

All started — Herbert sprang up from his position with a glance of withering rage. Venetia was perplexed, Lady Annabel looked round, and recognised the identical face, however distorted by passion, that she had admired in the portrait at Arquâ.

"And who are these?" exclaimed the intruder, advancing. "Perfidious Marmion! to whom do you dare to kneel?"

Lady Annabel drew herself up to a height that seemed to look down even upon this tall stranger. The expression of majestic scorn that she cast upon the intruder made her, in spite of all her violence and excitement, tremble and be silent: she felt cowed she knew not why.

"Come, Venetia," said Lady Annabel with all her usual composure, "let me save my daughter at least from this profanation."

"Annabel!" said Herbert, rushing after them, "be charitable, be just!" He followed them to the threshold of the door; Venetia was silent, for she was alarmed.

"Adieu! Marmion!" said Lady Annabel, looking over her shoulder with a bitter smile, but placing her daughter before her as if to guard her. "Adieu, Marmion, adieu for ever!"

CHAPTER VI.

The moon shone brightly on the house of Petrarch, and the hamlet slept in peace. Not a sound was heard, save the shrill voice of the grasshoppers, so incessant that its monotony blended, as it were, with the stillness. Over the green hills and the far expanse of the sheeny plain, the beautiful light of heaven fell with all the magical repose of the serene hour — an hour that brought to one troubled breast, and one distracted spirit, in that still and simple village, no quietude.

Herbert came forth into the balcony of his residence, and leaning over the balustrade, revolved in his agitated mind the strange and stirring incidents of the day. His wife and his child had quitted the inn of Rovigo instantly after that mortifying rencounter that had dashed so cruelly to the ground all his sweet and quickly-rising hopes. As for his companion, she had by his peremptory desire returned to Arquâ alone; he was not in a mood to endure her society, but he had conducted himself to her mildly, though with firm-

ness; he had promised to follow her, and in pursuance of his pledge, he rode home alone.

He was greeted on his return by his servant, full of the visit of the morning. With an irresistible curiosity, Herbert had made him describe every incident that had occurred, and repeat a hundred times every word that the visitors had uttered. He listened with some consolation, however mournful, to his wife's praises of the unknown stranger's life; he gazed with witching interest upon the autograph of his daughter on the wall of his library. He had not confessed to his mistress the relation which the two strangers bore to him; yet he was influenced in concealing the real circumstances only by an indefinite sentiment, that made him reluctant to acknowledge to her ties so pure. The feelings of the parent overpowered the principles of the philosopher. This lady, although at the moment she had indulged in so violent an ebullition of temper, possessed little influence over the mind of her companion. Herbert, however fond of solitude, required in his restricted world the graceful results of feminine superintendence. Time had stilled his passions, and cooled the fervour of his soul. The age of his illusions had long past. This was a connection that had commenced in no extravagant or romantic mood, and perhaps for that reason had endured. He had become acquainted with her on his first unknown arrival in Italy, from America, now nearly two years back. It had been maintained on his side by a temper naturally sweet, and which, exhausted by years of violent emo-

tion, now required only repose; seeking, in a female friend, a form that should not outrage an eye ever musing on the beautiful, and a disposition that should contribute to his comfort, and never ruffle his feelings. Separated from his wife by her own act, whatever might have been its impulse, and for so long an interval, it was a connection which the world in general might have looked upon with charity, which in her calmer hours one would imagine even Lady Annabel might have glanced over without much bitterness. Certainly it was one which, under all the circumstances of the case, could scarcely be esteemed by her as an outrage or an insult; but even Herbert felt, with all his philosophy and proud freedom from prejudice, that the rencounter of the morning was one which no woman could at the moment tolerate, few eventually excuse, and which of all incidents was that which would most tend to confirm his wife in her stoical obduracy. Of his offences towards her, whatever were their number or their quality, this surely was the least, and yet its results upon his life and fortunes would in all probability only be equalled by the mysterious cause of their original separation. But how much more bitter than that original separation was their present parting! Mortifying and annoying as had been the original occurrence, it was one that many causes and considerations combined to enable Herbert to support. He was then in the very prime of youth, very inexperienced, sanguine, restless and adventurous, with the whole world and its unknown results before him, and freedom

for which he ever sighed to compensate for the loss of that domestic joy that he was then unable to appreciate. But now twenty years, which, in the career of such a spirit, were equal to a century of the existence of coarser clay, had elapsed; he was bowed with thought and suffering, if not by time; his conscience was light but it was sad; his illusions had all vanished; he knew the world and all that the world could bring, and he disregarded them; and the result of all his profound study, lofty aspirations, and great conduct was, that he sighed for rest. The original catastrophe had been merely a separation between a husband and a wife: the one that had just happened, involved other feelings; the father was also separated from his child — and a child of such surpassing qualities, that his brief acquaintance with her had alone sufficed to convert his dream of domestic repose into a vision of domestic bliss.

Beautiful Venetia! So fair, and yet so dutiful; with a bosom teeming with such exquisite sensibilities, and a mind bright with such acute and elevated intelligence! An abstract conception of the sentiments that might subsist between a father and a daughter, heightened by all the devices of a glowing imagination, had haunted occasionally the solitary musings of Marmion Herbert; but what was this creation of his poetic brain, compared with the reality that now had touched his human heart? Vainly had he believed that repose was the only solace that remained for his exhausted spirit. He found that a new passion now swayed his soul; a passion, too,

that he had never proved; of a nature most peculiar; pure, gentle, refined, yet ravishing and irresistible, compared with which all former transports, no matter how violent, tumultuous, and exciting, seemed evanescent and superficial: they were indeed the wind, the fire, and the tempest that had gone before, but this was the still small voice that followed, excelled, and survived their might and majesty, unearthly and eternal!

His heart melted to his daughter, nor did he care to live without her love and presence. His philosophical theories all vanished. He felt how dependent we are in this world on our natural ties, and how limited, with all his arrogance, is the sphere of man. Dreaming of philanthropy, he had broken his wife's heart, and bruised, perhaps irreparably, the spirit of his child; he had rendered those miserable who depended on his love, and for whose affection his heart now yearned to that degree, that he could not contemplate existence without their active sympathy.

Was it then too late? Was it then impossible to regain that Paradise he had forfeited so weakly, and of whose amaranthine bowers, but a few hours since, he had caught such an entrancing glimpse, of which the gate for a moment seemed about to re-open? In spite of all, then, Annabel still loved him — loved him passionately, visited his picture, mused over the glowing expression of their loves, wept over the bridal bed so soon deserted! She had a dog, too, when Venetia was a child, and called it Marmion.

The recollection of this little trait, so trifling, yet so touching, made him weep even with wildness. The tears poured down his cheeks in torrents, he sobbed convulsively, his very heart seemed to burst. For some minutes he leant over the balustrade in a paroxysm of grief.

He looked up. The convent hill rose before him, bright in the moon; beneath was his garden; around him the humble roofs that he made happy. It was not without an effort that he recalled the locality — that he remembered he was at Arquâ. And who was sleeping within the house? Not his wife — Annabel was far away with their daughter. The vision of his whole life passed before him. Study and strife, and fame and love; the pride of the philosopher, the rapture of the poet, the blaze of eloquence, the clash of arms, the vows of passion, the execration and the applause of millions; both once alike welcome to his indomitable soul! And what had they borne to him? Misery. He called up the image of his wife, young, beautiful, and noble, with a mind capable of comprehending his loftiest and his finest moods, with a soul of matchless purity, and a temper whose winning tenderness had only been equalled by her elevated sense of self-respect; a woman that might have figured in the days of chivalry, soft enough to be his slave, but too proud to be his victim. He called up her image in the castle of his fathers, exercising in a domain worthy of such a mistress, all those sweet offices of life which here, in this hired roof in a strange land, and with his crippled means, he had

yet found solacing. He conjured before him a bud by the side of that beauteous flower, sharing all her lustre and all her fragrance — his own Venetia! What happiness might not have been his! And for what had he forfeited it? A dream, with no dream-like beauty; a perturbed, and restless, and agitated dream, from which he had now woke shattered and exhausted.

He had sacrificed his fortune, he had forfeited his country, he had alienated his wife, and he had lost his child; the home of his heroic ancestry, the ancient land whose fame and power they had created, the beauteous and gifted woman who would have clung for ever to his bosom, and her transcendent offspring worthy of all their loves! Profound philosopher!

The clock of the convent struck the second hour after midnight. Herbert started. And all this time where were Annabel and Venetia? They still lived, they were in the same country, an hour ago they were under the same roof, in the same chamber; their hands had joined, their hearts had opened, for a moment he had dared to believe that all that he cared for might be regained. And why was it not? The cause — the cause? It recurred to him with associations of dislike, of disgust, of wrath, of hatred, of which one whose heart was so tender, and whose reason was so clear, could under the influence of no other feelings have been capable. The surrounding scene, that had so often soothed his mournful soul, and connected it with the last hours of a spirit to whom he bore much resemblance, was now looked upon with aversion. To rid himself of ties, now so

dreadful, was all his ambition. He entered the house quickly, and, seating himself in his closet, he wrote these words: —

"You beheld this morning my wife and child; we can meet no more. All that I can effect to console you under this sudden separation shall be done. My banker from Bologna will be here in two days; express to him all your wishes."

It was written, sealed, directed, and left upon the table at which they had so often been seated. Herbert descended into the garden, saddled his horse, and in a few minutes, in the heart of night, had quitted Arquâ.

CHAPTER VII.

The moment that the wife of Marmion Herbert re-entered her saloon, she sent for her courier and ordered horses to her carriage instantly. Until they were announced as ready, Lady Annabel walked up and down the room with an impatient step, but was as completely silent as the miserable Venetia, who remained weeping on the sofa. The confusion and curiosity of Mistress Pauncefort were extraordinary. She still had a lurking suspicion that the gentleman was Lord Cadurcis, and she seized the first opportunity of leaving the room, and flouncing into that of the stranger, as if by mistake, determined to catch a glimpse of him; but all her notable skill was baffled, for she had scarcely opened the door before she was met by the Italian lady, who

received Mistress Pauncefort's ready-made apology, and bowed her away. The faithful attendant then hurried down stairs to cross-examine the waiter, but, though she gained considerable information from that functionary, it was of a very perplexing nature; for from him she only learnt that the stranger lived at Arquâ. "The German gentleman!" soliloquized Mistress Pauncefort; "and what could he have to say to Miss Venetia! and a married man, too! Well, to be sure there is nothing like travelling for adventures! And I must say, considering all that I know, and how I have held my tongue for nearly twenty years, I think it very strange indeed of my lady to have any secrets from me. Secrets, indeed! Poh!" and Mistress Pauncefort flounced again into Lady Annabel's room, with a face of offended pride, knocking the books about, dashing down writing cases, tossing about work, and making as much noise and disturbance as if she had a separate quarrel with every single article under her superintendence.

In the meantime, the carriage was prepared, to which they were obliged almost to carry Venetia, feeble and stupefied with grief. Uncertain of her course, but anxious, in the present state of her daughter, for rest and quiet, Lady Annabel ordered the courier to proceed to Padua, at which city they arrived late at night, scarcely a word having been interchanged during the whole journey between Lady Annabel and her child, though infinite were the soft and soothing attentions which the mother lavished upon her. Night, however,

brought no rest to Venetia; and the next day, her state appeared so alarming to Lady Annabel, that she would have instantly summoned medical assistance, had it not been for Venetia's strong objections. "Indeed, dear mother," she said, "it is not physicians that I require. They cannot cure me. Let me be quiet."

The same cause, which during the last five years had at intervals so seriously menaced the existence of this unhappy girl, was now at work with renovated and even irresistible influence. Her frame could no longer endure the fatal action of her over-excited nerves. Her first illness, however alarming, had been baffled by time, skill, and principally by the vigour of an extremely youthful frame, then a stranger to any serious indisposition. At a later period, the change of life induced by their residence at Weymouth had permitted her again to rally. She had quitted England with renewed symptoms of her former attack, but a still more powerful change, not only of scene, but of climate and country, and the regular and peaceful life she had led on the Lago Maggiore, had again reassured the mind of her anxious mother. This last adventure at Rovigo, however, prostrated her. The strange surprise, the violent development of feeling, the agonising doubts and hopes, the terrible suspense, the profound and bitter and overwhelming disappointment, all combined to shake her mind to its very foundations. She felt for the first time, that she could no longer bear up against the torture of her singular position. Her energy was entirely exhausted; she was no longer capable of

making the slightest exertion; she took refuge in that torpid resignation that results from utter hopelessness.

Lying on her sofa, with her eyes fixed in listless abstraction, the scene at Rovigo flitted unceasingly before her languid vision. At length she had seen that father, that unknown and mysterious father, whose idea had haunted her infancy as if by inspiration; to gain the slightest knowledge of whom had cost her such long and acute suffering; and round whose image for so many years every thought of her intelligence, and every feeling of her heart, had clustered like spirits round some dim and mystical altar. At length she had beheld him; she had gazed on that spiritual countenance; she had listened to the tender accents of that musical voice; within his arms she had been folded with rapture, and pressed to a heart that seemed to beat only for her felicity. The blessing of her father, uttered by his long-loved lips, had descended on her brow, and been sealed with his passionate embrace.

The entrance of her mother — that terrible contest of her lacerated heart, when her two parents, as it were, appealed to her love, which they would not share; the inspiration of her despair, that so suddenly had removed the barriers of long years, before whose irresistible pathos her father had bent a penitent, and her mother's inexorable pride had melted; the ravishing bliss that for a moment had thrilled through her, being experienced too for the first time, when she felt that her parents were again united and bound by the sweet tie of her now happy existence; — this was the drama

acted before her with an almost ceaseless repetition of its transporting incidents; and when she looked round, and beheld her mother sitting alone, and watching her with a countenance almost of anguish, it was with extreme difficulty that Venetia could persuade herself that all had not been a reverie; and she was only convinced of the contrary by that heaviness of the heart which too quickly assures us of the reality of those sorrows of which fancy for a moment may cheat us into scepticism.

And indeed her mother was scarcely less miserable. The sight of Herbert, so changed from the form that she remembered; those tones of heart-rending sincerity, in which he had mournfully appealed to the influence of time and sorrow on his life, still greatly affected her. She had indulged for a moment in a dream of domestic love, she had cast to the winds the inexorable determination of a life, and had mingled her tears with those of her husband and her child. And how had she been repaid? By a degrading catastrophe, from whose revolting associations her mind recoiled with indignation and disgust. But her lingering feeling for her husband, her own mortification, were as nothing compared with the harrowing anxiety she now entertained for her daughter. To converse with Venetia on the recent occurrence, was impossible. It was a subject which admitted of no discussion. They had passed a week at Padua, and the slightest allusion to what had happened had never been made by either Lady Annabel or her child. It was only by her lavish testimonies of affection that Lady

Annabel conveyed to Venetia how deeply she sympathised with her, and how unhappy she was herself. She had never quitted for a moment the side of her daughter; and witnessed each day, with renewed anguish, her deplorable condition; for Venetia continued in a state which, to those unacquainted with her, might have been mistaken for insensibility, but her mother knew too well that it was despair. She never moved, she never sighed, or wept; she took no notice of anything that occurred; she sought relief in no resources. Books, and drawings, and music, were quite forgotten by her; nothing amused, and nothing annoyed her; she was not even fretful; she had, apparently, no physical ailment; she remained pale and silent, plunged in an absorbing paroxysm of overwhelming woe.

The unhappy Lady Annabel, at a loss how to act, at length thought it might be advisable to cross over to Venice. She felt assured now, that it would be a long time, if ever, before her child could again endure the fatigue of travel; and she thought that for every reason, whether for domestic comfort or medical advice, or those multifarious considerations which interest the invalid, a capital was by far the most desirable residence for them. There was a time when a visit to the city that had given her a name, had been a favourite dream of Venetia; she had often sighed to be within

> "The sea-born city's walls; the graceful towers
> Loved by the bard."

Those lines of her father had long echoed in her

ear; but now the proposition called no light to her glazed eye, nor summoned for an instant the colour back to her cheek. She listened to her mother's suggestion, and expressed her willingness to do whatever she desired. Venice to her was now only a name; for, without the presence and the united love of both her parents, no spot on earth could interest, and no combination of circumstances affect her. To Venice, however, they departed, having previously taken care that every arrangement should be made for their reception. The English ambassador at the Ducal court was a relative of Lady Annabel, and therefore no means or exertions were spared to study and secure the convenience and accommodation of the invalid. The barge of the ambassador met them at Fusina; and when Venetia beheld the towers and cupolas of Venice, suffused with a golden light and rising out of the bright blue waters, for a moment her spirit seemed to lighten. It is indeed a spectacle as beautiful as rare, and one to which the world offers few, if any, rivals. Gliding over the great Lagune, the buildings, with which the pictures at Cherbury had already made her familiar, gradually rose up before her; the mosque-like Church of St. Marc, the tall Campanile red in the sun, the Moresco Palace of the Doges, the deadly Bridge of Sighs, and the dark structure to which it leads.

Venice had not then fallen. The gorgeous standards of the sovereign republic, and its tributary kingdoms, still waved in the Place of St. Marc; the Bucentaur was not rotting in the Arsenal, and the warlike galleys

of the state cruised without the Lagune; a busy and picturesque population swarmed in all directions; and the Venetian noble, the haughtiest of men, might still be seen proudly moving from the council of state, or stepping into a gondola amid a bowing crowd. All was stirring life, yet all was silent; the fantastic architecture, the glowing sky, the flitting gondolas, and the brilliant crowd gliding about with noiseless step — this city without sound — it seemed a dream!

CHAPTER VIII.

The ambassador had engaged for Lady Annabel a palace on the Grand Canal, belonging to Count Manfrini. It was a structure of great size and magnificence, and rose out of the water with a flight of marble steps. Within was a vast gallery, lined with statues and busts on tall pedestals; suites of spacious apartments, with marble floors and hung with satin; ceilings painted by Tintoretto and full of Turkish trophies; furniture alike sumptuous and massy; the gilding, although of two hundred years' duration, as bright and burnished as if it had but yesterday been touched with the brush — Sequin gold, as the Venetians tell you to this day with pride. But even their old furniture will soon not be left to them, as palaces are now daily broken up like old ships, and their colossal spoils consigned to Hanway Yard and Bond Street, whence, re-burnished and vamped up, their Titanic proportions in time appropriately figure in the boudoirs of May Fair and the miniature saloons

of St. James'. Many a fine lady now sits in a Doge's chair, and many a dandy listens to his doom from a couch that has already witnessed the less inexorable decrees of the Council of Ten.

Amid all this splendour, however, one mournful idea alone pervaded the tortured consciousness of Lady Annabel Herbert. Daily the dark truth stole upon her with increased conviction, that Venetia had come hither only to die. There seemed to the agitated ear of this distracted mother a terrible omen even in the very name of her child; and she could not resist the persuasion that her final destiny would, in some degree, be connected with her fanciful appellation. The physicians (for hopeless as Lady Annabel could not resist esteeming their interference, Venetia was now surrounded with physicians) shook their heads, prescribed different remedies and gave contrary opinions; each day, however, their patient became more languid, thinner and more thin, until she seemed like a beautiful spirit gliding into the saloon, leaning on her mother's arm, and followed by Pauncefort, who had now learnt the fatal secret from her mistress, and whose heart was indeed almost broken at the prospect of the calamity that was impending over them.

At Padua, Lady Annabel, in her mortified reveries, outraged as she conceived by her husband, and anxious about her daughter, had schooled herself into visiting her fresh calamities on the head of the unhappy Herbert, to whose intrusion and irresistible influence she ascribed all the illness of her child; but, as the indis-

position of Venetia gradually, but surely, increased, until at length it assumed so alarming an aspect that Lady Annabel, in the distraction of her mind, could no longer refrain from contemplating the most fatal result, she had taught herself bitterly to regret the failure of that approaching reconciliation which now she could not but believe would, at least, have secured her the life of Venetia. Whatever might be the risk of again uniting herself with her husband, whatever might be the mortification and misery which it might ultimately, or even speedily, entail upon her, there was no unhappiness that she could herself experience, which for one moment she could put in competition with the existence of her child. When that was the question, every feeling that had hitherto impelled her conduct assumed a totally different complexion. That conduct, in her view, had been a systematic sacrifice of self to secure the happiness of her daughter; and the result of all her exertions was, that not only her happiness was destroyed, but her life was fast vanishing away. To save Venetia, it now appeared to Lady Annabel that there was no extremity which she would not endure; and if it came to a question, whether Venetia should survive, or whether she should even be separated from her mother, her maternal heart now assured her that she would not for an instant hesitate in preferring an eternal separation to the death of her child. Her terror now worked to such a degree upon her character, that she even, at times, half resolved to speak to Venetia upon the subject, and contrive some method of communi-

cating her wishes to her father; but pride, the habitual repugnance of so many years to converse upon the topic, mingled also, as should be confessed, with an indefinite apprehension of the ill consequences of a conversation of such a character on the nervous temperament of her daughter, restrained her.

"My love!" said Lady Annabel, one day to her daughter, "do you think you could go out? The physicians think it of great importance that you should attempt to exert yourself, however slightly."

"Dear mother, if anything could annoy me from your lips, it would be to hear you quote these physicians," said Venetia. "Their daily presence and inquiries irritate me. Let me be at peace. I wish to see no one but you."

"But Venetia," said Lady Annabel, in a voice of great emotion, "Venetia —," and here she paused; "think of my anxiety."

"Dear mother, it would be ungrateful for me ever to forget that. But you, and you alone, know that my state, whatever it may be, and to whatever it may be I am reconciled, is not produced by causes over which these physicians have any control, over which no one has control — now," added Venetia, in a tone of great mournfulness.

For here we must remark that so inexperienced was Venetia in the feelings of others, and so completely did she judge of the strength and purity of their emotions from her own, that reflection, since the terrible adventure of Rovigo, had only convinced her that it

was no longer in her mother's power to unite herself again with her other parent. She had taught herself to look upon her father's burst of feeling towards Lady Annabel as the momentary and inevitable result of a meeting so unexpected and overpowering, but she did not doubt that the stranger whose presence had ultimately so fatally clouded that interview of promise, possessed claims upon Marmion Herbert which he would neither break, nor, upon reflection, be desirous to question. It was then the conviction that a reconciliation between her parents was now impossible, in which her despair originated, and she pictured to herself her father once more at Arquâ, disturbed, perhaps, for a day or two, as he naturally must be, by an interview so sudden and so harassing; shedding a tear, perhaps, in secret to the wife whom he had injured, and the child whom he had scarcely seen; but relapsing, alike from the force of habit and inclination, into those previous and confirmed feelings, under whose influence, she was herself a witness, his life had been so serene, and even so laudable. She was confirmed in these opinions by the circumstance of their never having heard since from him. Placed in his situation, if indeed an irresistible influence were not controlling him, would he have hesitated for a moment to have prevented even their departure, or to have pursued them; to have sought at any rate some means of communicating with them? He was plainly reconciled to his present position, and felt that under these circumstances silence on his part was alike kindest and most discreet. Venetia had

ceased, therefore, to question the justice or the expediency, or even the abstract propriety, of her mother's conduct. She viewed their condition now as the result of stern necessity. She pitied her mother, and for herself she had no hope.

There was then much meaning in that little monosyllable with which Venetia concluded her reply to her mother. She had no hope "now." Lady Annabel, however, ascribed it to a very different meaning; she only believed that her daughter was of opinion that nothing would induce her now to listen to the overtures of her father. Prepared for any sacrifice of self, Lady Annabel replied, "But there is hope, Venetia; when your life is in question, there is nothing that should not be done."

"Nothing can be done," said Venetia, who, of course, could not dream of what was passing in her mother's mind.

Lady Annabel rose from her seat and walked to the window; apparently her eye watched only the passing gondolas, but indeed she saw them not; she saw only her child stretched perhaps on the couch of death.

"We quitted, perhaps, Rovigo too hastily," said Lady Annabel, in a choking voice, and with a face of scarlet. It was a terrible struggle, but the words were uttered.

"No, mother," said Venetia, to Lady Annabel's inexpressible surprise, "we did right to go."

"Even my child, even Venetia, with all her devo-

tion to him, feels the absolute necessity of my conduct," thought Lady Annabel. Her pride returned; she felt the impossibility of making an overture to Herbert; she looked upon their daughter as the last victim of his fatal career.

CHAPTER IX.

How beautiful is night in Venice! Then music and the moon reign supreme; the glittering sky reflected in the waters, and every gondola gliding with sweet sounds! Around on every side are palaces and temples, rising from the waves which they shadow with their solemn forms, their costly fronts rich with the spoils of kingdoms, and softened with the magic of the midnight beam. The whole city too is poured forth for festival. The people lounge on the quays and cluster on the bridges; the light barks skim along in crowds, just touching the surface of the water, while their bright prows of polished iron gleam in the moonshine, and glitter in the rippling wave. Not a sound that is not graceful — the tinkle of guitars, the sighs of serenaders, and the responsive chorus of gondoliers. Now and then a laugh, light, joyous, and yet musical, bursts forth from some illuminated coffee-house, before which a buffo disports, a tumbler stands on his head, or a juggler mystifies: and all for a sequin!

The Place of St. Marc, at the period of our story, still presented the most brilliant spectacle of the kind in Europe. Not a spot was more distinguished for

elegance, luxury, and enjoyment. It was indeed the inner shrine of the temple of pleasure, and very strange and amusing would be the annals of its picturesque arcades. We must not however step behind their blue awnings, but content ourselves with the exterior scene; and certainly the Place of St. Marc, with the variegated splendour of its Christian mosque, the ornate architecture of its buildings, its diversified population, a tribute from every shore of the midland sea, and where the noble Venetian, in his robe of crimson silk, and long white wig, might be jostled by the Sclavonian with his target, and the Albanian in his kilt, while the Turk, sitting cross-legged on his Persian carpet, smoked his long chibouque with serene gravity, and the mild Armenian glided by him with a low reverence, presented an aspect under a Venetian moon, such as we shall not easily find again in Christendom, and, in spite of the dying glory and the neighbouring vice, was pervaded with an air of romance and refinement, compared with which the glittering dissipation of Paris, even in its liveliest and most graceful hours, assumes a character alike coarse and common-place.

It is the hour of love and of faro; now is the hour to press your suit and to break a bank; to glide from the apartment of rapture into the chamber of chance. Thus a noble Venetian contrived to pass the night, in alternations of excitement that in general left him sufficiently serious for the morrow's council. For more vulgar tastes there was the minstrel, the conjurer, and the story-teller, goblets of Cyprus wine, flasks of sherbet,

and confectionary that dazzled like diamonds. And for every one, from the grave senator to the gay gondolier, there was an atmosphere in itself a spell, and which, after all, has more to do with human happiness than all the accidents of fortune and all the arts of government.

Amid this gay and brilliant multitude, one human being stood alone. Muffled in his cloak, and leaning against a column in the portico of St. Marc, an expression of oppressive care and affliction was imprinted on his countenance, and ill accorded with the light and festive scene. Had he been crossed in love, or had he lost at play? Was it woman or gold to which his anxiety and sorrow were attributable, for under one or other of these categories, undoubtedly, all the miseries of man may range. Want of love, or want of money, lies at the bottom of all our griefs.

The stranger came forward, and leaving the joyous throng, turned down the Piazzetta, and approached the quay of the Lagune. A gondolier saluted him, and he entered his boat.

"Whither, Signor?" said the gondolier.

"To the Grand Canal," he replied.

Over the moonlit wave the gondola swiftly skimmed! The scene was a marvellous contrast to the one which the stranger had just quitted; but it brought no serenity to his care-worn countenance, though his eye for a moment kindled as he looked upon the moon, that was sailing in the cloudless heaven with a single star by her side.

They had soon entered the Grand Canal, and the gondolier looked to his employer for instructions. "Row opposite to the Manfrini palace," said the stranger, "and rest upon your oar."

The blinds of the great window of the palace were withdrawn. Distinctly might be recognised a female figure bending over the recumbent form of a girl. An hour passed away and still the gondola was motionless, and still the silent stranger gazed on the inmates of the palace. A servant now came forward and closed the curtain of the chamber. The stranger sighed, and waving his hand to the gondolier, bade him return to the Lagune.

CHAPTER X.

It is curious to recall our feelings at a moment when a great event is impending over us, and we are utterly unconscious of its probable occurrence. How often does it happen that a subject which almost unceasingly engages our mind, is least thought of at the very instant that the agitating suspense involved in its consideration is perhaps about to be terminated for ever! The very morning after the mysterious gondola had rested so long before the Manfrini Palace, Venetia rose for the first time since the flight from Rovigo, refreshed by her slumbers and tranquil in her spirit. It was not in her power to recall her dreams; but they had left a vague and yet serene impression. There seemed a lightness in her heart, that long had been

unusual with her, and she greeted her mother with a smile, faint indeed, yet natural.

Perhaps this beneficial change, slight but still delightful, might be attributed to the softness and the splendour of the morn. Before the approach of winter, it seemed that the sun was resolved to remind the Venetians that they were his children; and that, although his rays might be soon clouded for a season, they were not to believe that their parent had deserted them. The sea was like glass, a golden haze suffused the horizon, and a breeze, not strong enough to disturb the waters, was wafted at intervals from the gardens of the Brenta, fitful and sweet.

Venetia had yielded to the suggestion of her mother, and had agreed for the first time to leave the palace. They stepped into their gondola, and were wafted to an island in the Lagune where there was a convent, and, what in Venice was more rare and more delightful, a garden. Its scanty shrubberies sparkled in the sun; and a cypress flanked by a pine-tree offered to the eye unused to trees a novel and picturesque group. Beneath its shade they rested, watching on one side the distant city, and, on the other the still and gleaming waters of the Adriatic. While they were thus sitting, renovated by the soft air and pleasant spectacle, a holy father, with a beard like a meteor, appeared and addressed them.

"Welcome to St. Lazaro!" said the holy father, speaking in English; "and may the peace that reigns within its walls fill also your breasts!"

"Indeed, holy father," said Lady Annabel to the Armenian monk, "I have long heard of your virtues and your happy life."

"You know that Paradise was placed in our country," said the monk with a smile. "We have all lost Paradise, but the Armenian has lost his country too. Nevertheless, with God's blessing, on this islet we have found an Eden, pure at least and tranquil."

"For the pious, Paradise exists everywhere," said Lady Annabel.

"You have been in England, holy father?" said Venetia.

"It has not been my good fortune," replied the monk.

"Yet you speak our tongue with a facility and accent that surprise me."

"I learnt it in America where I long resided," rejoined the Armenian.

"This is for your eye, lady," continued the monk, drawing a letter from his bosom.

Lady Annabel felt not a little surprised; but the idea immediately occurred to her that it was some conventual memorial, appealing to her charity. She took the paper from the monk, who immediately moved away; but what was the agitation of Lady Annabel when she recognised the hand-writing of her husband! Her first thought was to save Venetia from sharing that agitation. She rose quickly; she commanded herself sufficiently to advise her daughter, in a calm tone, to remain seated, while for a moment she refreshed

herself by a stroll. She had not quitted Venetia many paces, when she broke the seal and read these lines: —

"Tremble not, Annabel, when you recognise this hand-writing. It is that of one whose only aspiration is to contribute to your happiness; and although the fulfilment of that fond desire may be denied him, it never shall be said, even by you, that any conduct of his should now occasion you annoyance. I am in Venice at the peril of my life, which I only mention because the difficulties inseparable from my position are the principal cause that you did not receive this communication immediately after our strange meeting. I have gazed at night upon your palace, and watched the forms of my wife and our child; but one word from you, and I quit Venice for ever, and it shall not be my fault if you are ever again disturbed by the memory of the miserable Herbert.

"But before I go, I will make this one appeal if not to your justice, at least to your mercy. After the fatal separation of a life, we have once more met: you have looked upon me not with hatred; my hand has once more pressed yours; for a moment I indulged the impossible hope, that this weary and exhausted spirit might at length be blessed. With agony I allude to the incident that dispelled the rapture of this vision. Sufficient for me most solemnly to assure you that four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed without that feeble and unhallowed tie being severed for ever! It vanished instantaneously before the presence of my wife and my child. However you decide, it can never

again subsist: its utter and eternal dissolution was the inevitable homage to your purity.

"Whatever may have been my errors, whatever my crimes — for I will not attempt to justify to you a single circumstance of my life — I humble myself in the dust before you, and solicit only mercy; yet whatever may have been my career, ah! Annabel, in the infinite softness of your soul was it not for a moment pardoned? Am I indeed to suffer for that last lamentable intrusion? You are a woman, Annabel, with a brain as clear as your heart is pure. Judge me with calmness, Annabel; were there no circumstances in my situation to extenuate that deplorable connection? I will not urge them; I will not even intimate them; but surely, Annabel, when I kneel before you full of deep repentance and long remorse, if you could pardon the past, it is not that incident, however mortifying to you, however disgraceful to myself, that should be an impassable barrier to all my hopes!

"Once you loved me; I ask you not to love me now. There is nothing about me now that can touch the heart of woman. I am old before my time; bent with the blended influence of action and of thought, and of physical and moral suffering. The play of my spirit has gone for ever. My passions have expired like my hopes. The remaining sands of my life are few. Once it was otherwise: you can recall a different picture of the Marmion on whom you smiled, and of whom you were the first love. O! Annabel, — grey, feeble, exhausted, penitent, — let me stagger over your

threshold, and die! I ask no more; I will not hope for your affection; I will not even count upon your pity; but endure my presence; let your roof screen my last days!"

It was read; it was read again, dim as was the sight of Lady Annabel with fast-flowing tears. Still holding the letter, but with hands fallen, she gazed upon the shining waters before her in a fit of abstraction. It was the voice of her child that roused her.

"Mother," said Venetia in a tone of some decision, "you are troubled, and we have only one cause of trouble. That letter is from my father."

Lady Annabel gave her the letter in silence.

Venetia withdrew almost unconsciously a few paces from her mother. She felt this to be the crisis of her life. There never was a moment which she believed required more fully the presence of all her energies. Before she had addressed Lady Annabel, she had endeavoured to steel her mind to great exertion. Yet now that she held the letter, she could not command herself sufficiently to read it. Her breath deserted her, — her hand lost its power; she could not even open the lines on which perhaps her life depended. Suddenly, with a rapid effort she glanced at the contents. The blood returned to her cheek, — her eye became bright with excitement, — she gasped for breath, — she advanced to Lady Annabel. "Ah! mother," she exclaimed, "you will grant all that it desires!"

Still gazing on the wave that laved the shore of

the island with an almost imperceptible ripple, Lady Annabel continued silent.

"Mother," said Venetia, "my beloved mother, you hesitate." She approached Lady Annabel, and with one arm round her neck, she grasped with the other her mother's hand. "I implore you, by all that affection which you lavish on me, yield to this supplication. O! mother, dearest mother, it has been my hope that my life has been at least a life of duty; I have laboured to yield to all your wishes. I have struggled to make their fulfilment the law of my being. Yes! mother, your memory will assure you, that when the sweetest emotions of my heart were the stake, you appealed to me to sacrifice them, and they were dedicated to your will. Have I ever murmured? I have sought only to repay your love by obedience. Speak to me, dearest mother! I implore you speak to me! Tell me can you ever repent relenting in this instance! O! mother, you will not hesitate; you will not indeed; you will bring joy and content to our long-harassed hearth! Tell me so; I beseech you tell me so! I wish, oh! how I wish, that you would comply from the mere impulse of your own heart! But grant that it is a sacrifice; grant that it may be unwise — that it may be vain; — I supplicate you to make it! I, your child, who never deserted you, who will never desert you, pledging my faith to you in the face of heaven; for my sake, I supplicate you to make it! You do not hesitate — you cannot hesitate; mother, you cannot hesitate. Ah! you would not if you knew all; if you

knew all the misery of my life, you would be glad, — you would be cheerful,— you would look upon this as an interposition of Providence in favour of your Venetia; you would, indeed, dear mother!"

"What evil fortune guided our steps to Italy!" said Lady Annabel in a solemn tone, and as if in soliloquy.

"No, no, mother; not evil fortune; fortune the best and brightest," exclaimed her daughter. "We came here to be happy, and happiness we have at length gained. It is in our grasp; I feel it. It was not fortune, dear mother, it was fate, it was Providence, it was God. You have been faithful to Him, and he has brought back to you my father, chastened and repentant. God has turned his heart to all your virtues. Will you desert him? No, no, mother, you will not, you cannot; for his sake, for your own sake, and for your child's, you will not!"

"For twenty years I have acted from an imperious sense of duty," said Lady Annabel, "and for your sake, Venetia, as much as for my own. Shall the feeling of a moment —"

"O! mother, dearest mother, say not these words. With me, at least, it has not been the feeling of a moment. It haunted my infancy; it harassed me while a girl; it has brought me in the prime of womanhood to the brink of the grave. And with you, mother, has it been the feeling of a moment! Ah! you ever loved him, when his name was never breathed by those lips. You loved him when you deemed he had forgotten

you; when you pictured him to yourself in all the pride of health and genius, wanton and daring; and now, now that he comes to you penitent, perhaps dying, more like a remorseful spirit than a breathing being, and humbles himself before you, and appeals only to your mercy, ah! my mother, you cannot reject, you could not reject him, even if you were alone, — even if you had no child!"

"My child! my child! all my hopes were in my child," murmured Lady Annabel.

"Is she not by your side?" said Venetia.

"You know not what you ask; you know not what you counsel," said Lady Annabel. "It has been the prayer and effort of my life that you should never know. There is a bitterness in the reconciliation which follows long estrangement, that yields a pang more acute even than the first disunion. Shall I be called upon to mourn over the wasted happiness of twenty years? Why did he not hate us?"

"The pang is already felt, mother," said Venetia. "Reject my father, but you cannot resume the feelings of a month back. You have seen him; you have listened to him. He is no longer the character which justified your conduct, and upheld you under the trial. His image has entered your soul; your heart is softened. Bid him quit Venice without seeing you, and you will remain the most miserable of women."

"On his head, then, be the final desolation," said Lady Annabel; "it is but a part of the lot that he has yielded me."

"I am silent," said Venetia, relaxing her grasp. "I see that your child is not permitted to enter into your considerations." She turned away.

"Venetia!" said her mother.

"Mother!" said Venetia, looking back, but not returning.

"Return one moment to me."

Venetia slowly rejoined her. Lady Annabel spoke in a kind and gentle, though serious tone.

"Venetia," she said, "what I am about to speak is not the impulse of the moment, but has been long revolved in my mind; do not, therefore, misapprehend it. I express without passion what I believe to be truth. I am persuaded that the presence of your father is necessary to your happiness; nay, more, to your life. I recognise the mysterious influence which he has ever exercised over your existence. I feel it impossible for me any longer to struggle against a power to which I bow. Be happy, then, my daughter, and live. Fly to your father, and be to him as matchless a child as you have been to me." She uttered these last words in a choking voice.

"Is this, indeed, the dictate of your calm judgment, mother?" said Venetia.

"I call God to witness, it has of late been more than once on my lips. The other night, when I spoke of Rovigo, I was about to express this."

"Then mother," said Venetia, "I find that I have been misunderstood. At least I thought my feelings towards yourself had been appreciated. They have

not; and I can truly say, my life does not afford a single circumstance to which I can look back with content. Well will it indeed be for me to die!"

"The dream of my life," said Lady Annabel in a tone of infinite distress, "was that she, at least, should never know unhappiness. It was indeed a dream."

There was now a silence of several minutes. Lady Annabel remained in exactly the same position, Venetia standing at a little distance from her, looking resigned and sorrowful.

"Venetia," at length said Lady Annabel, "why are you silent?"

"Mother, I have no more to say. I pretend not to act in this life; it is my duty to follow you."

"And your inclination?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"I have ceased to have a wish upon any subject," said Venetia.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel with a great effort, "I am miserable."

This unprecedented confession of suffering from the strong mind of her mother, melted Venetia to the heart. She advanced, and threw her arms round her mother's neck, and buried her weeping face in Lady Annabel's bosom.

"Speak to me, my daughter," said Lady Annabel; "counsel me, for my mind trembles; anxiety has weakened it. Nay, I beseech you speak. Speak, speak, Venetia. What shall I do?"

"Mother, I will never say anything again but that I love you!"

"I see the holy father in the distance. Let us walk to him, my child, and meet him."

Accordingly Lady Annabel, now leaning on Venetia, approached the monk. About five minutes elapsed before they reached him, during which not a word was spoken.

"Holy father," said Lady Annabel in a tone of firmness that surprised her daughter and made her tremble with anticipation, "you know the writer of this letter?"

"He is my friend of many years, lady," replied the Armenian; "I knew him in America. I owe to him my life, and more than my life. There breathes not his equal among men."

A tear started to the eye of Lady Annabel; she recalled the terms in which the household at Arquâ had spoken of Herbert. "He is in Venice?" she inquired.

"He is within these walls," the monk replied.

Venetia, scarcely able to stand, felt her mother start. After a momentary pause, Lady Annabel said, "Can I speak with him, and alone?"

Nothing but the most nervous apprehension of throwing any obstacle in the way of the interview could have sustained Venetia. Quite pale, with her disengaged hand clenched, not a word escaped her lips. She hung upon the answer of the monk.

"You can see him, and alone," said the monk. "He is now in the sacristy. Follow me."

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, "remain in this

garden. I will accompany this holy man! Stop! embrace me before I go, and," she added, in a whisper, "pray for me."

It needed not the admonition of her mother to induce Venetia to seek refuge in prayer, in this agony of her life. But for its salutary and stilling influence, it seemed to her that she must have forfeited all control over her mind. The suspense was too terrible for human aid to support her. Seated by the sea-side, she covered her face with her hands, and invoked the Supreme assistance. More than an hour passed away. Venetia looked up. Two beautiful birds, of strange form and spotless plumage, that perhaps had wandered from the Egean, were hovering over her head, bright and glancing in the sun. She accepted their appearance as a good omen. At this moment she heard a voice, and, looking up, observed the monk in the distance, beckoning to her. She rose, and with a trembling step approached him. He retired, still motioning to her to follow him. She entered, by a low portal, a dark cloister; it led to an ante-chapel, through which, as she passed, her ear caught the solemn chorus of the brethren. Her step faltered; her sight was clouded; she was as one walking in a dream. The monk opened a door, and, retiring, waved his hand, as for her to enter. There was a spacious and lofty chamber, scantily furnished, some huge chests, and many sacred garments. At the extreme distance her mother was reclined on a bench, her head supported by a large crimson cushion, and her father kneeling by her

mother's side. With a soundless step, and not venturing even to breathe, Venetia approached them, and, she knew not how, found herself embraced by both her parents.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

In a green valley of the Apennines, close to the sea-coast between Genoa and Spezzia, is a marine villa, that once belonged to the Malaspina family, in olden time the friends and patrons of Dante. It is rather a fantastic pile, painted in fresco, but spacious, in good repair, and convenient. Although little more than a mile from Spezzia, a glimpse of the blue sea can only be caught from one particular spot, so completely is the land locked with hills, covered with groves of chestnut and olive orchards. From the heights, however, you enjoy magnificent prospects of the most picturesque portion of the Italian coast; a lofty, undulating, and wooded shore, with an infinite variety of bays and jutting promontories; while the eye, wandering from Leghorn on one side towards Genoa on the other, traces an almost uninterrupted line of hamlets and casinos, gardens and orchards, terraces of vines, and groves of olive. Beyond them, the broad and blue expanse of the midland ocean, glittering in the meridian blaze, or about to receive perhaps in its glowing waters the red orb of sunset.

It was the month of May, in Italy, at least, the merry month of May, and Marmion Herbert came forth from the villa Malaspina, and throwing himself on the turf, was soon lost in the volume of Plato which he bore with him. He did not move until in the course of an hour he was roused by the arrival of servants, who brought seats and a table, when, looking up, he observed Lady Annabel and Venetia in the portico of the villa. He rose to greet them, and gave his arm to his wife.

"Spring in the Apennines, my Annabel," said Herbert, "is a happy combination. I am more in love each day with this residence. The situation is so sheltered, the air so soft and pure, the spot so tranquil, and the season so delicious, that it realizes all my romance of retirement. As for you, I never saw you look so well; and as for Venetia, I can scarcely believe this rosy nymph could have been our pale-eyed girl, who cost us such anxiety!"

"Our breakfast is not ready. Let us walk to our sea view," said Lady Annabel. "Give me your book to carry, Marmion."

"There let the philosopher repose," said Herbert, throwing the volume on the turf. "Plato dreamed of what I enjoy."

"And of what did Plato dream, papa?" said Venetia.

"He dreamed of love, child."

Venetia took her father's disengaged arm.

They had now arrived at their sea view, a glimpse of the Mediterranean between two tall crags.

"A sail in the offing!" said Herbert. "How that solitary sail tells, Annabel!"

"I feel the sea breeze, mother. Does not it remind you of Weymouth?" said Venetia.

"Ah! Marmion," said Lady Annabel, "I would that you could see Masham once more. He is the only friend that I regret."

"He prospers, Annabel; let that be our consolation: I have at least not injured him."

They turned their steps; their breakfast was now prepared. The sun had risen above the hill beneath whose shade they rested, and the opposite side of the valley sparkled in light. It was a cheerful scene. "I have a passion for living in the air," said Herbert; "I always envied the shepherds in Don Quixote. One of my youthful dreams was living among mountains of rosemary, and drinking only goats' milk. After breakfast I will read you Don Quixote's description of the golden age. I have often read it until the tears came into my eyes."

"We must fancy ourselves in Spain," said Lady Annabel; "it is not difficult in this wild green valley; and if we have not rosemary, we have scents as sweet. Nature is our garden here, Venetia; and I do not envy even the statues and cypresses of our villa of the lake."

"We must make a pilgrimage some day to the

Maggiore, Annabel," said Herbert. "It is hallowed ground to me now."

Their meal was finished, the servants brought their work, and books, and drawings; and Herbert, resuming his natural couch, re-opened his Plato, but Venetia ran into the villa, and returned with a volume. "You must read us the golden age, papa," she said, as she offered him, with a smile, his favourite Don Quixote.

"You must fancy the Don looking earnestly upon a handful of acorns," said Herbert, opening the book, "while he exclaims, 'O! happy age, which our first parents called the age of gold! not because gold, so much adored in this iron age, was then easily purchased, but because those two fatal words, *meum* and *tuum*, were distinctions unknown to the people of those fortunate times; for all things were in common in that holy age: men, for their sustenance, needed only to lift their hands, and take it from the sturdy oak, whose spreading arms liberally invited them to gather the wholesome savoury fruit; while the clear springs, and silver rivulets, with luxuriant plenty, afforded them their pure refreshing water. In hollow trees, and in the clefts of rocks, the labouring and industrious bees erected their little commonwealths, that men might reap with pleasure and with ease the sweet and fertile harvest of their toils. The tough and strenuous cork-trees did, of themselves, and without other art than their native liberality, dismiss and impart their broad light bark, which served to cover those lowly huts,

propped up with rough-hewn stakes, that were first built as a shelter against the inclemencies of the air. All then was union, all peace, all love and friendship in the world. As yet no rude ploughshare presumed with violence to pry into the pious bowels of our mother earth, for she without compulsion kindly yielded from every part of her fruitful and spacious bosom, whatever might at once satisfy, sustain, and indulge her frugal children. Then was the time when innocent, beautiful young shepherdesses went tripping over the hills and vales; their lovely hair sometimes plaited, sometimes loose and flowing, clad in no other vestment but what the modesty of nature might require. The Tyrian dye, the rich glossy hue of silk, martyred and dissembled into every colour, which are now esteemed so fine and magnificent, were unknown to the innocent simplicity of that age; yet, bedecked with more becoming leaves and flowers, they outshone the proudest of the vain-dressing ladies of our times, arrayed in the most magnificent garbs and all the most sumptuous adornings which idleness and luxury have taught succeeding pride. Lovers then expressed the passion of their souls in the unaffected language of the heart, with the native plainness and sincerity in which they were conceived, and divested of all that artificial contexture which enervates what it labours to enforce. Imposture, deceit, and malice had not yet crept in, and imposed themselves unbribed upon mankind in the disguise of truth: justice, unbiassed either by favour or interest, which now so fatally pervert it, was equally

and impartially dispensed; nor was the judge's fancy law, for then there were neither judges nor causes to be judged. The modest maid might then walk alone. But, in this degenerate age, fraud and a legion of ills infecting the world, no virtue can be safe, no honour be secure; while wanton desires, diffused into the hearts of men, corrupt the strictest watches and the closest retreats, though as intricate and unknown as the labyrinth of Crete, are no security for chastity. Thus, that primitive innocence being vanished, the oppression daily prevailing, there was a necessity to oppose the torrent of violence; for which reason the order of knighthood errant was instituted, to defend the honour of virgins, protect widows, relieve orphans, and assist all that are distressed. Now I myself am one of this order, honest friends; and though all people are obliged by the law of nature to be kind to persons of my character, yet since you, without knowing anything of this obligation, have so generously entertained me, I ought to pay you my utmost acknowledgment, and accordingly return you my most hearty thanks."

"There," said Herbert, as he closed the book. "In my opinion, Don Quixote was the best man that ever lived."

"But he did not ever live," said Lady Annabel, smiling.

"He lives to us," said Herbert. "He is the same to this age as if he had absolutely wandered over the plains of Castille and watched in the Sierra Morena.

We cannot, indeed, find his tomb; but he has left us his great example. In his hero, Cervantes has given us the picture of a great and benevolent philosopher, and in his Sancho, a complete personification of the world, selfish and cunning, and yet overawed by the genius that he cannot comprehend: alive to all the material interests of existence, yet sighing after the ideal; securing his four young foals of the she-ass, yet indulging in dreams of empire."

"But what do you think of the assault on the windmills, Marmion?" said Lady Annabel.

"In the outset of his adventures, as in the outset of our lives, he was misled by his enthusiasm," replied Herbert, "without which, after all, we can do nothing. But the result is, Don Quixote was a redresser of wrongs, and therefore the world esteemed him mad."

In this vein, now conversing, now occupied with their pursuits, and occasionally listening to some passage which Herbert called to their attention, and which ever served as the occasion for some critical remarks, that were as striking from their originality as they were happy in their expression, the freshness of the morning disappeared; the sun now crowned the valley with his meridian beam, and they re-entered the villa. The ladies returned to their cool saloon, and Herbert to his study.

It was there he amused himself by composing the following lines: —

SPRING IN THE APENNINES.

I.

SPRING in the Apennine now holds her court
Within an amphitheatre of hills,
Clothed with the blooming chestnut; musical
With murmuring pines, waving their light green cones
Like youthful Bacchants; while the dewy grass,
The myrtle and the mountain violet,
Blend their rich odours with the fragrant trees,
And sweeten the soft air. Above us spreads
The purple sky, bright with the unseen sun
The hills yet screen, altho' the golden beam
Touches the topmost boughs, and tints with light
The grey and sparkling crags. The breath of morn
Still lingers in the valley; but the bee
With restless passion hovers on the wing,
Waiting the opening flower, of whose embrace
The sun shall be the signal. Poised in air,
The winged minstrel of the liquid dawn,
The lark, pours forth his lyric, and responds
To the fresh chorus of the sylvan doves,
The stir of branches and the fall of streams:
The harmonies of nature!

II.

Gentle Spring!
Once more, oh, yes! once more I feel thy breath,
And charm of renovation! To the sky
Thou bringest light, and to the glowing earth
A garb of grace: but sweeter than the sky
That hath no cloud, and sweeter than the earth
With all its pageantry, the peerless boon
Thou bearest to me — a temper like thine own;

A springlike spirit, beautiful and glad!
Long years — long years of suffering, and of thought
Deeper than woe, had dimmed the eager eye
Once quick to catch thy brightness, and the ear
That lingered on thy music, the harsh world
Had jarred. The freshness of my life was gone,
And hope no more an omen in thy bloom
Found of a fertile future! There are minds
Like lands but with one season, and that drear;
Mine was eternal winter!

III.

A dark dream
Of hearts estranged, and of an Eden lost
Entranced my being; one absorbing thought,
Which, if not torture, was a dull despair
That agony were light to. But while sad
Within the desert of my life I roamed,
And no sweet springs of love gushed forth to greet
My wearied heart, — behold two spirits came
Floating in light, seraphic ministers,
The semblance of whose splendour on me fell
As on some dusky stream the matin ray
Touching the gloomy waters with its life.
And both were fond and one was merciful!
And to my home long forfeited they bore
My vagrant spirit, and the gentle hearth
I reckless fled, received me with its shade
And pleasant refuge. And our softened hearts
Were like the twilight, when our very bliss
Calls tears to soothe our rapture; as the stars
Steal forth, then shining smiles their trembling ray
Mixed with our tenderness; and love was there
In all his manifold forms; the sweet embrace,
And thrilling pressure of the gentle hand,
And silence speaking with the melting eye!

IV.

And now again I feel thy breath, O Spring!
And now the seal hath fallen from my gaze,
And thy wild music in my ready ear
Finds a quick echo! The discordant world
Mars not thy melodies; thy blossoms now
Are emblems of my heart; and through my veins
The flow of youthful feeling, long pent up,
Glides like thy sunny streams! In this fair scene,
On forms still fairer I my blessing pour;
On her the beautiful, the wise, the good,
Who learnt the sweetest lesson to forgive;
And on the bright-eyed daughter of our love,
Who soothed a mother, and a father saved!

CHAPTER II.

Between the reconciliation of Lady Annabel Herbert with her husband, at the Armenian convent at Venice, and the spring morning in the Apennines, which we have just described, half a year had intervened. The political position of Marmion Herbert rendered it impossible for him to remain in any city where there was a representative of his Britannic Majesty. Indeed, it was scarcely safe for him to be known out of America. He had quitted that country shortly after the struggle was over, chiefly from considerations for his health. His energies had been fast failing him; and a retired life and change of climate had been recommended by his physicians. His own feelings induced him to visit Italy, where he had once intended to pass his life, and where he now repaired to await death.

Assuming a feigned name, and living in strict seclusion, it is probable that his presence would never have been noticed. Once more united with his wife, her personal influence at the court of St. James', and her powerful connections, might secure him from annoyance; and Venetia had even indulged in a vague hope of returning to England. But Herbert could only have found himself again in his native country as a prisoner on parole. It would have been quite impossible for him to mix in the civil business of his native land, or enjoy any of the rights of citizenship. If a mild sovereign in his mercy had indeed accorded him a pardon, it must have been accompanied with rigorous and mortifying conditions; and his presence, in all probability, would have been confined to his country residence and its immediate neighbourhood. The pride of Lady Annabel herself recoiled from this sufferance; and although Herbert — keenly conscious of the sacrifice which a permanent estrangement from England entailed upon his wife and child — would have submitted to any restrictions, however humiliating, provided they were not inconsistent with his honour, it must be confessed that, when he spoke of this painful subject to his wife, it was with no slight self-congratulation that he had found her resolution to remain abroad under any circumstances was fixed with her habitual decision. She communicated both to the Bishop of ****** and to her brother, the unexpected change that had occurred in her condition, and she had reason to believe that a representation of what had happened would be made to the Royal family.

Perhaps both the head of her house and her reverend friend anticipated that time might remove the barrier that presented itself to Herbert's immediate return to England: they confined their answers, however, to congratulations on the reconciliation, to their confidence in the satisfaction it would occasion her, and to the expression of their faithful friendship; and neither alluded to a result which both, if only for her sake, desired.

The Herberts had quitted Venice a very few days after the meeting on the island of St. Lazaro; had travelled by slow journeys, crossing the Apennines, to Genoa; and only remained in that city until they engaged their present residence. It combined all the advantages which they desired: seclusion, beauty, comfort, and the mild atmosphere that Venetia had seemed to require. It was not, however, the genial air that had recalled the rose to Venetia's cheek and the sunny smile to her bright eye, or had inspired again that graceful form with all its pristine elasticity. It was a heart content; a spirit at length at peace. The contemplation of the happiness of those most dear to her, that she hourly witnessed; and the blissful consciousness that her exertions had mainly contributed to, if not completely occasioned, all this felicity, were remedies of far more efficacy than all the consultations and prescriptions of her physicians. The conduct of her father repaid her for all her sufferings, and realised all her dreams of domestic tenderness and delight. Tender, grateful, and affectionate, Herbert hovered round her mother like a delicate spirit who had been released by

some kind mortal from a tedious and revolting thraldom, and who believed he could never sufficiently testify his devotion. There was so much respect blended with his fondness, that the spirit of her mother was utterly subdued by his irresistible demeanour. All her sadness and reserve, her distrust and her fear, had vanished; and rising confidence mingling with the love she had ever borne to him, she taught herself even to seek his opinion, and be guided by his advice. She could not refrain, indeed, from occasionally feeling — in this full enjoyment of his love — that she might have originally acted with too much precipitation; and that, had she only bent for a moment to the necessity of conciliation, and condescended to the excusable artifices of affection, their misery might have been prevented. Once when they were alone, her softened heart would have confessed to Herbert this painful conviction, but he was too happy and too generous to permit her for a moment to indulge in such a remorseful retrospect. All the error, he insisted, was his own; and he had been fool enough to have wantonly forfeited a happiness which time and experience had now taught him to appreciate.

"We married too young, Marmion," said his wife.

"It shall be that then, love," replied Herbert; "but for all that I have suffered, I would not have avoided my fate on the condition of losing the exquisite present!"

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to remark, that Herbert avoided with scrupulous vigilance the slightest

allusion to any of those peculiar opinions for which he was, unhappily, too celebrated. Musing over the singular revolutions which had already occurred in his habits and his feelings towards herself, Lady Annabel, indeed, did not despair that his once self-sufficient soul might ultimately bow to that blessed faith which to herself had ever proved so great a support, and so exquisite a solace. It was, indeed, the inexpressible hope that lingered at the bottom of her heart; and sometimes she even indulged in the delightful fancy that his mild and penitent spirit had, by the gracious mercy of Providence, been already touched by the bright sunbeam of conviction. At all events, his subdued and chastened temperament was no unworthy preparation for still greater blessings. It was this hallowed anticipation which consoled, and alone consoled, Lady Annabel for her own estrangement from the communion of her national church. Of all the sacrifices which her devotion to Herbert entailed upon her, this was the one which she felt most constantly and most severely. Not a day elapsed but the chapel at Cherbury rose before her; and when she remembered that neither herself nor her daughter might again kneel round the altar of their God, she almost trembled at the step which she had taken, and almost esteemed it a sacrifice of heavenly to earthly duty, which no consideration, perhaps, warranted. This apprehension, indeed, was the cloud in her life, and one which Venetia, who felt all its validity, found difficulty in combating.

Otherwise, when Venetia beheld her parents, she

felt ethereal, and seemed to move in air; for her life, in spite of its apparent tranquillity, was to her all excitement. She never looked upon her father, or heard his voice, without a thrill. His society was as delightful as his heart was tender. It seemed to her that she could listen to him for ever. Every word he spoke was different from the language of other men; there was not a subject on which his richly-cultivated mind could not pour forth instantaneously a flood of fine fancies and deep intelligence. He seemed to have read every book in every language, and to have mused over every line he had read. She could not conceive how one, the tone of whose mind was so original that it suggested on every topic some conclusion that struck instantly by its racy novelty, could be so saturated with the learning and the views of other men. Although they lived in unbroken solitude, and were almost always together, not a day passed that she did not find herself musing over some thought or expression of her father, and which broke from his mind without effort, and as if by chance. Literature to Herbert was now only a source of amusement and engaging occupation. All thought of fame had long fled his soul. He cared not for being disturbed; and he would throw down his Plato for Don Quixote, or close his Æschylus and take up a volume of Madame de Sévigné without a murmur, if reminded by anything that occurred of a passage which might contribute to the amusement and instruction of his wife and daughter. Indeed, his only study now was to contribute to their happiness. For him they had given up

their country and society, and he sought, by his vigilant attention and his various accomplishments, to render their hours as light and pleasant as, under such circumstances, was possible. His muse, too, was only dedicated to the celebration of any topic which their life or themselves suggested. He loved to lie under the trees, and pour forth sonnets to Lady Annabel; and encouraged Venetia, by the readiness and interest with which he invariably complied with her intimations, to throw out every fancy which occurred to her for his verse. A life passed without the intrusion of a single evil passion, without a single expression that was not soft, and graceful, and mild, and adorned with all the resources of a most accomplished and creative spirit, required not the distractions of society. It would have shrunk from it — from all its artificial excitement and vapid reaction. The days of the Herberts flowed on in one bright, continuous stream of love, and literature, and gentle pleasures. Beneath them was the green earth, above them the blue sky. Their spirits were as clear, and their hearts as soft as the clime.

The hour of twilight was approaching, and the family were preparing for their daily walk. Their simple repast was finished, and Venetia held the verses which her father had written in the morning, and which he had presented to her.

"Let us descend to Spezzia," said Herbert to Lady Annabel; "I love an ocean sunset."

Accordingly they proceeded through their valley to the craggy path which led down to the bay. After

passing through a small ravine, the magnificent prospect opened before them. The sun was yet an hour above the horizon, and the sea was like a lake of molten gold; the colour of the sky nearest to the sun, of a pale green, with two or three burnished streaks of vapour, quite still, and so thin you could almost catch the sky through them, fixed, as it were, in this gorgeous frame. It was now a dead calm, but the sail that had been hovering the whole morning in the offing, had made the harbour in time, and had just cast anchor near some coasting craft and fishing-boats, all that now remained where Napoleon had projected forming one of the arsenals of the world.

Tracing their way down a mild declivity, covered with spreading vineyards, and quite fragrant with the blossom of the vine, the Herberts proceeded through a wood of olives, and emerged on a terrace raised directly above the shore, leading to Spezzia, and studded here and there with rugged groups of aloes.

"I have often observed here," said Venetia, "about a mile out at sea — there, now, where I point — the water rise. It is now a calm, and yet it is more troubled, I think, than usual. Tell me the cause, dear father, for I have often wished to know."

"It passes my experience," said Herbert; "but here is an ancient fisherman; let us inquire of him."

He was an old man, leaning against a rock, and smoking his pipe in contemplative silence; his face bronzed with the sun and the roughness of many seasons, and his grey hairs not hidden by his long blue

cap. Herbert saluted him, and, pointing to the phenomenon, requested an explanation of it.

"'Tis a fountain of fresh water, Signor, that rises in our gulf," said the old fisherman, "to the height of twenty feet."

"And is it constant?" inquired Herbert.

"'Tis the same in sunshine and in storm, in summer and in winter, in calm or in breeze," said the old fisherman.

"And has it always been so?"

"It came before my time."

"A philosophic answer," said Herbert, "and deserves a paul. Mine was a crude question. Adio, good friend."

"I should like to drink of that fountain of fresh water, Annabel," said Herbert. "There seems to me something wondrous fanciful in it. Some day we will row there. It shall be a calm like this."

"We want a fountain in our valley," said Lady Annabel.

"We do," said Herbert; "and I think we must make one; we must inquire at Genoa. I am curious in fountains. Our fountain should, I think, be classical; simple, compact, with a choice inscription, the altar of a Naiad."

"And mamma shall make the design, and you shall write the inscription," said Venetia.

"And you shall be the nymph, child," said Herbert.

They were now within a bowshot of the harbour, and a jutting cliff of marble, more graceful from a con-

tiguous bed of myrtles, invited them to rest, and watch the approaching sunset.

"Say what they like," said Herbert, "there is a spell in the shores of the Mediterranean Sea which no others can rival. Never was such a union of natural loveliness and magical associations! On these shores have risen all that interests us in the past: — Egypt and Palestine, Greece, Rome, and Carthage, Moorish Spain, and feodal Italy. These shores have yielded us our religion, our arts, our literature, and our laws. If all that we have gained from the shores of the Mediterranean was erased from the memory of man, we should be savages. Will the Atlantic ever be so memorable? Its civilization will be more rapid, but will it be as refined? and, far more important, will it be as permanent? Will it not lack the racy vigour and the subtle spirit of aboriginal genius? Will not a colonial character cling to its society? — feeble, inanimate, evanescent. What America is deficient in is creative intellect. It has no nationality. Its intelligence has been imported, like its manufactured goods. Its inhabitants are a people, but are they a nation? I wish that the empire of the Incas and the kingdom of Montezuma had not been sacrificed. I wish that the republic of the Puritans had blended with the tribes of the wilderness."

The red sun was now hovering over the horizon; it quivered for an instant, and then sank. Immediately the high and undulating coast was covered with a crimson flush; the cliffs, the groves, the bays and jutting pro-

montories, each straggling sail and tall white tower, suffused with a rosy light. Gradually that rosy tint became a bright violet, and then faded into purple. But the glory of the sunset long lingered in the glowing west, streaming with every colour of the Iris — while a solitary star glittered with silver light amid the shifting splendour.

"Hesperus rises from the sunset like the fountain of fresh water from the sea," said Herbert, "The sky and the ocean have two natures, like ourselves."

At this moment the boat of the vessel, which had anchored about an hour back, put to shore.

"That seems an English brig," said Herbert. "I cannot exactly make out its trim; it scarcely seems a merchant vessel."

The projection of the shore hid the boat from their sight as it landed. The Herberts rose, and proceeded towards the harbour. There were some rude steps cut in the rock which led from the immediate shore to the terrace. As they approached these, two gentlemen in sailors' jackets mounted suddenly. Lady Annabel and Venetia simultaneously started as they recognised Lord Cadurcis and his cousin. They were so close, that neither party had time to prepare themselves. Venetia found her hand in that of Plantagenet, while Lady Annabel saluted George. Infinite were their mutual inquiries and congratulations, but it so happened that, with one exception, no name was mentioned. It was quite evident, however, to Herbert, that these were very familiar acquaintances of his family; for, in the

surprise of the moment, Lord Cadurcis had saluted his daughter by her christian name. There was no slight emotion, too, displayed on all sides. Indeed, independently of the agitation which so unexpected a rencounter was calculated to produce, the presence of Herbert, after the first moments of recognition, not a little excited the curiosity of the young men, and in some degree occasioned the embarrassment of all. Who was this stranger, on whom Venetia and her mother were leaning with such fondness? He was scarcely too old to be the admirer of Venetia, and if there were a greater disparity of years between them than is usual, his distinguished appearance might well reconcile the lady to her lot, or even justify her choice. Had, then, Cadurcis again met Venetia only to find her the bride or the betrothed of another? — a mortifying situation, even an intolerable one, if his feelings remained unchanged; and if the eventful year that had elapsed since they parted had not replaced her image in his susceptible mind by another more cherished, and, perhaps, less obdurate. Again, to Lady Annabel the moment was one of great awkwardness, for the introduction of her husband to those with whom she was recently so intimate, and who were then aware that the name of that husband was never even mentioned in her presence, recalled the painful past with a disturbing vividness. Venetia, indeed, did not share these feelings fully, but she thought it ungracious to anticipate her mother in the announcement.

The Herberts turned with Lord Cadurcis and his

cousin; they were about to retrace their steps on the terrace, when Lady Annabel, taking advantage of the momentary silence, and summoning all her energy, with a pale cheek and a voice that slightly faltered, said, "Lord Cadurcis, allow me to present you to Mr. Herbert, my husband," she added with emphasis.

"Good God!" exclaimed Cadurcis, starting; and then, outstretching his hand, he contrived to add, "have I, indeed, the pleasure of seeing one I have so long admired?"

"Lord Cadurcis!" exclaimed Herbert, scarcely less surprised. "Is it Lord Cadurcis? This is a welcome meeting."

Every one present felt overwhelmed with confusion or astonishment; Lady Annabel sought refuge in presenting Captain Cadurcis to her husband. This ceremony, though little noticed even by those more immediately interested in it, nevertheless served, in some degree, as a diversion. Herbert, who was only astonished, was the first who rallied. Perhaps Lord Cadurcis was the only man in existence whom Herbert wished to know. He had read his works with deep interest; at least, those portions which foreign journals had afforded him. He was deeply impressed with his fame and genius; but what perplexed him at this moment, even more than his unexpected introduction to him, was the singular, the very extraordinary circumstance, that the name of their most celebrated countryman should never have escaped the lips either of his wife or his daughter, although they appeared, and Ve-

netia especially, to be on terms with him of even domestic intimacy.

"You arrived here to-day, Lord Cadurcis?" said Herbert. "From whence?"

"Immediately from Naples, where we last touched," replied his lordship; "but I have been residing at Athens."

"I envy you," said Herbert.

"It would be a fit residence for you," said Lord Cadurcis. "You were, however, in some degree, my companion, for a volume of your poems was one of the few books I had with me. I parted with all the rest, but I retained that. It is in my cabin, and full of my scribblement. If you would condescend to accept it, I would offer it you."

Mr. Herbert and Lord Cadurcis maintained the conversation along the terrace. Venetia, by whose side her old companion walked, was quite silent. Once her eyes met those of Cadurcis; his expression of mingled archness and astonishment was irresistible. His cousin and Lady Annabel carried on a more suppressed conversation, but on ordinary topics. When they had reached the olive-grove, Herbert said, "Here lies our way homeward, my Lord. If you and your cousin will accompany us, it will delight Lady Annabel and myself."

"Nothing, I am sure, will give George and myself greater pleasure," he replied. "We had, indeed, no purpose when you met us but to enjoy our escape from

imprisonment; little dreaming we should meet our kindest and oldest friends," he added.

"Kindest and oldest friends!" thought Herbert to himself. "Well, this is strange indeed."

"It is but a slight distance," said Lady Annabel, who thought it necessary to enforce the invitation. "We live in the valley, of which yonder hill forms a part."

"And there we have passed our winter and our spring," added Venetia, "almost as delightfully as you could have done at Athens."

"Well," thought Cadurcis to himself, "I have seen many of the world's marvels, but this day is a miracle."

When they had proceeded through the olive-wood, and mounted the acclivity, they arrived at a path which permitted the ascent of only one person at a time. Cadurcis was last, and followed Venetia. Unable any longer to endure the suspense, he was rather irritated that she kept so close to her father; he himself loitered a few paces behind, and, breaking off a branch of laurel, he tossed it at her. She looked round and smiled; he beckoned to her to fall back. "Tell me, Venetia," he said, "what does all this mean?"

"It means that we are at last all very happy," she replied. "Do you not see my father?"

"Yes; and I am very glad to see him; but this company is the very last in which I expected to have that pleasure."

"It is too long a story to tell now; you must imagine it."

"But are you glad to see me?"

"Very."

"I don't think you care for me the least."

"Silly Lord Cadurcis!" she said, smiling.

"If you call me Lord Cadurcis, I shall immediately go back to the brig, and set sail this night for Athens."

"Well then, silly Plantagenet!"

He laughed, and they ran on.

CHAPTER III.

"Well, I am not surprised that you should have passed your time delightfully here," said Lord Cadurcis to Lady Annabel, when they had entered the villa; "for I never beheld so delightful a retreat. It is even more exquisite than your villa on the lake, of which George gave me so glowing a description. I was almost tempted to hasten to you. Would you have smiled on me!" he added, rather archly, and in a coaxing tone.

"I am more gratified that we have met here," said Lady Annabel.

"And thus," added Cadurcis.

"You have been a great traveller since we last met?" said Lady Annabel, a little embarrassed.

"My days of restlessness are over," said Cadurcis. "I desire nothing more dearly than to settle down in the bosom of these green hills as you have done."

"This life suits Mr. Herbert," said Lady Annabel.

"He is fond of seclusion, and you know I am accustomed to it."

"Ah! yes," said Cadurcis, mournfully. "When I was in Greece, I used often to wish that none of us had ever left dear Cherbury; but I do not now."

"We must forget Cherbury," said Lady Annabel.

"I cannot — I cannot forget her who cherished my melancholy childhood. Dear Lady Annabel," he added in a voice of emotion, and offering her his hand, "forget all my follies, and remember that I was your child, once as dutiful as you were affectionate."

Who could resist this appeal? Lady Annabel, not without agitation, yielded him her hand, which he pressed to his lips. "Now I am again happy," said Cadurcis; "now we are all happy. Sweetest of friends, you have removed in a moment the bitterness of years."

Although lights were in the saloon, the windows opening on the portico were not closed. The evening air was soft and balmy, and though the moon had not risen, the distant hills were clear in the starlight. Venetia was standing in the portico conversing with George Cadurcis.

"I suppose you are too much of a Turk to drink our coffee, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert. Cadurcis turned and joined him, together with Lady Annabel.

"Nay," said Lord Cadurcis, in a joyous tone, "Lady Annabel will answer for me that I always find everything perfect under her roof."

Captain Cadurcis and Venetia now re-entered the

villa; they clustered round the table, and seated themselves.

"Why, Venetia," said Cadurcis, "George met me in Sicily, and quite frightened me about you. Is it the air of the Apennines that has worked these marvels? for really, you appear to me exactly the same as when we learnt the French vocabulary together ten years ago."

"'The French vocabulary together, ten years ago!'" thought Herbert; "not a mere London acquaintance, then. This is very strange."

"Why, indeed, Plantagenet," replied Venetia, "I was very unwell when George visited us; but I really have quite forgotten that I ever was an invalid, and I never mean to be again."

"'Plantagenet!'" soliloquised Herbert. "And this is the great poet of whom I have heard so much! My daughter is tolerably familiar with him."

"I have brought you all sorts of buffooneries from Stamboul," continued Cadurcis; "sweetmeats, and slippers, and shawls, and daggers worn only by sultanas, and with which, if necessary, they can keep 'the harem's lord' in order. I meant to have sent them with George to England; for really I did not anticipate our meeting here."

"'Sweetmeats and slippers,'" said Herbert to himself, "'shawls and daggers?'"

"And has George been with you all the time?" inquired Venetia.

"Oh! we quarrelled now and then, of course. He

found Athens dull, and would stay at Constantinople, chained by the charms of a fair Perote, to whom he wanted me to write sonnets in his name. I would not, because I thought it immoral. But, on the whole, we got on very well; a sort of Pylades and Orestes, I assure you; we never absolutely fought."

"Come, come," said George, "Cadurcis is always ashamed of being amiable. We were together much more than I ever intended or anticipated. You know mine was a sporting tour; and therefore, of course, we were sometimes separated. But he was exceedingly popular with all parties, especially the Turks, whom he rewarded for their courtesy by writing odes to the Greeks to stir them up to revolt."

"Well, they never read them," said Cadurcis. "All we, poor fellows', can do," he added, turning to Herbert, "is to wake the Hellenistic raptures of May Fair; and that they call fame; as much like fame as a toadstool is like a truffle."

"Nevertheless, I hope the muse has not slumbered," said Herbert; "for you have had the happiest inspiration in the climes in which you have resided; not only are they essentially poetic, but they offer a virgin vein."

"I have written a little," replied Cadurcis; "I will give it you, if you like, some day to turn over. Yours is the only opinion that I really care for. I have no great idea of the poetry; but I am very strong in my costume. I feel very confident about that. I fancy I know how to hit off a pasha, or touch in a Greek

pirate now. As for all the things I wrote in England, I really am ashamed of them. I got up my orientalism from books, and sultans and sultanas at masquerades," he added, archly. "I remember I made my heroines always wear turbans; only conceive my horror when I found that a Turkish woman would as soon think of putting my hat on as a turban, and that it was an article of dress entirely confined to a Bond-street milliner."

The evening passed in interesting and diverting conversation; of course, principally contributed by the two travellers, who had seen so much. Inspirited by his interview with Lady Annabel, and her gracious reception of his overtures, Lord Cadurcis was in one of those frolic humours, which we have before noticed was not unnatural to him. He had considerable powers of mimicry, and the talent that had pictured to Venetia in old days, with such liveliness, the habits of the old maids of Morpeth, was now engaged on more considerable topics; an interview with a pasha, a peep into a harem, a visit to a pirate's isle, the slave-market, the bazaar, the barracks of the Janissaries; all touched with irresistible vitality, and coloured with the rich phrases of unrivalled force of expression. The laughter was loud and continual; even Lady Annabel joined zealously in the glee. As for Herbert, he thought Cadurcis by far the most hearty and amusing person he had ever known, and could not refrain from contrasting him with the picture which his works and the report of the world had occasionally enabled him to

sketch to his mind's eye; the noble, young, and impassioned bard, pouring forth the eloquent tide of his morbid feelings to an idolising world, from whose applause he nevertheless turned with almost misanthropic melancholy.

It was now much past the noon of night, and the hour of separation, long postponed, was inevitable. Often had Cadurcis risen to depart, and often, without regaining his seat, had he been tempted by his friends, and especially Venetia, into fresh narratives. At last he said, "Now we must go. Lady Annabel looks good night. I remember the look," he said, laughing, "when we used to beg for a quarter of an hour more. O! Venetia, do not you remember that Christmas, when dear old Masham read Julius Cæsar, and we were to sit up until it was finished. When he got to the last act I hid his spectacles. I never confessed it until this moment. Will you pardon me, Lady Annabel?" and he pressed his hands together in a mockery of supplication.

"Will you come and breakfast with us to-morrow?" said Lady Annabel.

"With delight," he answered. "I am used, you know, to walks before breakfast. George — I do not think George can do it, though. George likes his comforts: he is a regular John Bull. He was always calling for tea when we were in Turkey!"

At this moment Mistress Pauncefort entered the room, ostensibly on some little affair of her mistress, but really to reconnoitre.

"Ah! Mistress Pauncefort; my old friend, Mistress Pauncefort, how do you do?" exclaimed his lordship.

"Quite well, my lord, please your lordship; and very glad to see your lordship again, and looking so well too."

"Ah! Mistress Pauncefort, you always flattered me!"

"Oh! dear, my lord, your lordship, no," said Mistress Pauncefort, with a simper.

"But you, Pauncefort," said Cadurcis, "why there must be some magic in the air here. I have been complimenting your lady and Miss Venetia; but really, you, I should almost have thought it was some younger sister."

"Oh! my lord, you have such a way," said Mistress Pauncefort, retreating with a slow step that still lingered for a remark.

"Pauncefort, is that an Italian cap?" said Lord Cadurcis; "you know, Pauncefort, you were always famous for your caps." Mistress Pauncefort disappeared in a fluster of delight.

And now they had indeed departed. There was a pause of complete silence after they had disappeared, the slight and not painful reaction after the mirthful excitement of the last few hours. At length Herbert, dropping, as was his evening custom, a few drops of orange-flower into a tumbler of water, said, "Annabel, my love, I am rather surprised that neither you nor Venetia should have mentioned to me that you knew, and knew so intimately, a man like Lord Cadurcis."

Lady Annabel appeared a little confused; she looked even at Venetia, but Venetia's eyes were on the ground. At length she said, "In truth, Marmion, since we met we have thought only of you."

"Cadurcis Abbey, papa, is close to Cherbury," said Venetia.

"Cherbury!" said Herbert, with a faint blush, "I have never seen it, and now I shall never see it. No matter, my country is your mother and yourself. Some find a home in their country, I find a country in my home. Well," he added, in a gayer tone, "it has gratified me much to meet Lord Cadurcis. We were happy before, but now we are even gay. I like to see you smile, Annabel, and hear Venetia laugh. I feel, myself, quite an unusual hilarity. Cadurcis! It is very strange how often I have mused over that name. A year ago it was one of my few wishes to know him; my wishes, then, dear Annabel, were not very ambitious. They did not mount so high as you have since permitted them. And now I do know him, and under what circumstances! Is not life strange? But is it not happy? I feel it so. Good night, sweet wife; my darling daughter, a happy, happy night!" He embraced them ere they retired; and opening a volume composed his mind after the novel excitement of the evening.

CHAPTER IV.

CADURCIS left the brig early in the morning alone, and strolled towards the villa. He met Herbert halfway to Spezzia, who turned back with him towards home. They sat down on a crag opposite the sea; there was a light breeze, the fishing boats were out, and the view was as animated as the fresh air was cheering.

"There they go," said Cadurcis, smiling, "catching John Dory, as you and I try to catch John Bull. Now if these people could understand what two great men were watching them, how they would stare! But they don't care a sprat for us, not they! They are not part of the world — the three or four thousand civilised savages for whom we sweat our brains, and whose fetid breath perfumed with musk is fame. Pah!"

Herbert smiled. "I have not cared much myself for this same world."

"Why, no; you have done something, and shown your contempt for them. No one can deny that. I will some day, if I have an opportunity. I owe it them; I think I can show them a trick or two still.* I have got a Damascus blade in store for their thick hides. I will turn their flank yet."

"And gain a victory where conquest brings no glory. You are worth brighter laurels, Lord Cadurcis."

"Now is not it the most wonderful thing in the

* "I think I know a trick or two would turn
Your flanks." DON JUAN.

world that you and I have met?" said Cadurcis. "Now I look upon ourselves as something like, eh! Fellows with some pith in them. By Jove, if we only joined together, how we could lay it on! Crack, crack, crack! I think I see them wincing under the thong; the pompous poltroons! If you only knew how they behaved to me! By Jove, sir, they hooted me going to the House of Lords, and nearly pulled me off my horse. The ruffians would have massacred me if they could; and then they all ran away from a drummer-boy and a couple of grenadiers, who were going the rounds to change guard. Was not that good? Fine, eh? A brutish mob in a fit of morality about to immolate a gentleman, and then scampering off from a sentry. I call that human nature!"

"As long as they leave us alone, and do not burn us alive, I am content," said Herbert. "I am callous to what they say."

"So am I," said Cadurcis. "I made out a list the other day of all the persons and things I have been compared to. It begins well, with Alcibiades, but it ends with the Swiss giantess or the Polish dwarf, I forget which. Here is your book. You see it has been well thumbed. In fact, to tell the truth, it was my cribbing book, and I always kept it by me when I was writing at Athens, like a gradus, a *gradus ad Parnassum*, you know. But although I crib, I am candid, and you see I fairly own it to you."

"You are welcome to all I have ever written," said Herbert. "Mine were but crude dreams. I wished to

see man noble and happy; but if he will persist in being vile and miserable, I must even be content. I can struggle for him no more."

"Well, you opened my mind," said Cadurcis, "I owe you everything; but I quite agree with you that nothing is worth an effort. As for philosophy and freedom, and all that, they tell devilish well in a stanza; but men have always been fools and slaves, and fools and slaves they always will be."

"Nay," said Herbert, "I will not believe that. I will not give up a jot of my conviction of a great and glorious future for human destinies; but its consummation will not be so rapid as I once thought, and in the mean time I die."

"Ah! Death," said Lord Cadurcis, "that is a botherer. What can you make of death? There are those poor fishermen now; there will be a white squall, some day, and they will go down with those latteen sails of theirs, and be food for the very prey they were going to catch; and, if you continue living here, you may eat one of your neighbours in the shape of a shoal of red mullets, when it is the season. The great secret — we cannot penetrate that with all our philosophy, my dear Herbert. 'All that we know is, nothing can be known.' Barren, barren, barren! And yet what a grand world it is! Look at this bay, these blue waters, the mountains, and these chestnuts — devilish fine! The fact is, truth is veiled, but, like the Shechinah over the tabernacle, the veil is of dazzling light!"

"Life is the great wonder," said Herbert, "into which all that is strange and startling resolves itself. The mist of familiarity obscures from us the miracle of our being. Mankind are constantly starting at events which they consider extraordinary. But a philosopher acknowledges only one miracle, and that is life. Political revolutions, changes of empire, wrecks of dynasties and the opinions that support them, these are the marvels of the vulgar, but these are only transient modifications of life. The origin of existence is, therefore, the first object which a true philosopher proposes to himself. Unable to discover it, he accepts certain results from his unbiassed observation of its obvious nature, and on them he establishes certain principles to be our guides in all social relations, whether they take the shape of laws or customs. Nevertheless, until the principle of life be discovered, all theories and all systems of conduct founded on theory must be considered provisional."

"And do you believe that there is a chance of its being discovered?" inquired Cadurcis.

"I cannot, from any reason in my own intelligence, find why it should not," said Herbert.

"You conceive it possible that a man may attain earthly immortality?" inquired Cadurcis.

"Undoubtedly."

"By Jove," said Cadurcis, "if I only knew how, I would purchase an immense annuity directly."

"When I said undoubtedly," said Herbert, smiling, "I meant only to express that I know no invin-

cible reason to the contrary. I see nothing inconsistent with the existence of a Supreme Creator in the annihilation of death. It appears to me an achievement worthy of his omnipotence. I believe in the possibility, but I believe in nothing more. I anticipate the final result, but not by individual means. It will, of course, be produced by some vast and silent and continuous operation of nature, gradually effecting some profound and comprehensive alteration in her order — a change of climate, for instance, the great enemy of life, — so that the inhabitants of the earth may attain a patriarchal age. This renovated breed may in turn produce a still more vigorous offspring, and so we may ascend the scale from the three score and ten of the Psalmist, to the immortality of which we speak. Indeed I, for my own part, believe the operation has already commenced, although thousands of centuries may elapse before it is consummated; the three score and ten of the Psalmist is already obsolete; the whole world is talking of the general change of its seasons and its atmosphere. If the origin of America were such as many profound philosophers suppose, viz. a sudden emersion of a new continent from the waves, it is impossible to doubt that such an event must have had a very great influence on the climate of the world. Besides, why should we be surprised that the nature of man should change? Does not everything change? Is not change the law of nature? My skin changes every year, my hair never belongs to me a month, the nail on my hand is only a passing possession. I doubt

whether a man at fifty is the same material being that he is at five-and-twenty."

"I wonder," said Lord Cadurcis, "if a creditor brought an action against you at fifty for goods delivered at five-and-twenty, one could set up the want of identity as a plea in bar. It would be a consolation to an elderly gentleman."

"I am afraid mankind are too hostile to philosophy," said Herbert, smiling, "to permit so desirable a consummation."

"Should you consider a long life a blessing?" said Cadurcis. "Would you like, for instance, to live to the age of Methusalem?"

"Those whom the gods love die young," said Herbert. "For the last twenty years I have wished to die, and I have sought death. But my feelings, I confess, on that head are at present very much modified."

"Youth, glittering youth!" said Cadurcis, in a musing tone; "I remember when the prospect of losing my youth frightened me out of my wits; I dreamt of nothing but grey hairs, a paunch, and the gout or the gravel. But I fancy every period of life has its pleasures, and as we advance in life the exercise of power and the possession of wealth must be great consolations to the majority; we bully our children and hoard our cash."

"Two most noble occupations!" said Herbert; "but I think in this world there is just as good a chance of

being bullied by our children first, and paying their debts afterwards."

"Faith! you are right," said Cadurcis, laughing, "and lucky is he who has neither creditors nor offspring, and who owes neither money nor affection, after all the most difficult to pay of the two."

"It cannot be commanded, certainly," said Herbert. "There is no usury for love."

"And yet it is very expensive, too, sometimes," said Cadurcis, laughing. "For my part sympathy is a puzzler."

"You should read Cabanis," said Herbert, "if, indeed, you have not. I think I may find it here; I will lend it you. It has, from its subject, many errors, but it is very suggestive."

"Now, that is kind, for I have not a book here, and, after all, there is nothing like reading. I wish I had read more, but it is not too late. I envy you your learning, besides so many other things. However, I hope we shall not part in a hurry; we have met at last," he said, extending his hand, "and we were always friends."

Herbert shook his hand warmly. "I can assure you, Lord Cadurcis, you have not a more sincere admirer of your genius. I am happy in your society. For myself, I now aspire to be nothing better than an idler in life, turning over a page, and sometimes noting down a fancy. You have, it appears, known my family long and intimately, and you were, doubtless, surprised at finding me with them. I have returned to

my hearth, and I am content. Once I sacrificed my happiness to my philosophy, and now I have sacrificed my philosophy to my happiness."

"Dear friend!" said Cadurcis, putting his arm affectionately in Herbert's, as they walked along — "for, indeed, you must allow me to style you so — all the happiness and all the sorrow of my life alike flow from your roof!"

In the mean time Lady Annabel and Venetia came forth from the villa to their morning meal in their amphitheatre of hills. Marmion was not there to greet them as usual.

"Was not Plantagenet amusing last night?" said Venetia; "and are not you happy, dear mother, to see him once more?"

"Indeed I am now always happy," said Lady Annabel.

"And George was telling me last night, in this portico, of all their life. He is more attached to Plantagenet than ever. He says it is impossible for any one to have behaved with greater kindness, or to have led, in every sense, a more calm and rational life. When he was alone at Athens, he did nothing but write. George says that all his former works are nothing to what he has written now."

"He is very engaging," said Lady Annabel.

"I think he will be such a delightful companion for papa. I am sure papa must like him. I hope he will stay some time; for, after all, poor dear papa, he

must require a little amusement besides our society. Instead of being with his books, he might be walking and talking with Plantagenet. I think, dearest mother, we shall be happier than ever!"

At this moment Herbert, with Cadurcis leaning on his arm, and apparently speaking with great earnestness, appeared in the distance. "There they are," said Venetia; "I knew they would be friends. Come, dearest mother, let us meet them."

"You see, Lady Annabel," said Lord Cadurcis, "it is just as I said: Mr. George is not here; he is having tea and toast on board the brig."

"I do not believe it," said Venetia, smiling.

They seated themselves at the breakfast-table.

"You should have seen our Apennine breakfasts in the autumn, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert; "every fruit of nature seemed crowded before us. It was indeed a meal for a poet or a painter like Paul Veronese; our grapes, our figs, our peaches, our mountain strawberries, — they made a glowing picture. For my part, I have an original prejudice against animal food which I have never quite overcome, and I believe it is only to please Lady Annabel that I have relapsed into the heresy of cutlets."

"Do you think I have grown fatter, Lady Annabel?" said Lord Cadurcis, starting up; "I brought myself down at Athens to bread and olives, but I have been committing terrible excesses lately, but only fish."

"Ah! here is George!" said Lady Annabel.

And Captain Cadurcis appeared, followed by a couple of sailors, bearing a huge case.

"George," said Venetia, "I have been defending you against Plantagenet; he said you would not come."

"Never mind, George, it was only behind your back," said Lord Cadurcis; "and under those legitimate circumstances, why even our best friends cannot expect us to spare them."

"I have brought Venetia her toys," said Captain Cadurcis, "and she was right to defend me, as I have been working for her."

The top of the case was knocked off, and all the Turkish buffooneries, as Cadurcis called them, made their appearance: slippers, and shawls, and bottles of perfumes, and little hand mirrors, beautifully embroidered; and fanciful daggers, and rosaries, and a thousand other articles, of which they had plundered the bazaars of Constantinople.

"And here is a Turkish volume of poetry, beautifully illuminated; and that is for you," said Cadurcis, giving it to Herbert. "Perhaps it is a translation of one of our works. Who knows? We can always say it is."

"This is the second present you have made me, this morning. Here is a volume of my works," said Herbert, producing the book that Cadurcis had before given him. "I never expected that anything I wrote would be so honoured. This, too, is the work of which I am the least ashamed, for my wife admired it.

There, Annabel, even though Lord Cadurcis is here, I will present it to you; 'tis an old friend."

Lady Annabel accepted the book very graciously, and, in spite of all the temptations of her toys, Venetia could not refrain from peeping over her mother's shoulder at its contents. — "Mother," she whispered, in a voice inaudible save to Lady Annabel, "I may read this?"

Lady Annabel gave it her.

"And now we must send for Pauncefort, I think," said Lady Annabel, "to collect and take care of our treasures."

"Pauncefort," said Lord Cadurcis, when that gentlewoman appeared, "I have brought you a shawl, but I could not bring you a turban, because the Turkish ladies do not wear turbans; but if I had thought we should have met so soon, I would have had one made on purpose for you."

"La! my lord, you always are so polite!"

CHAPTER V.

When the breakfast was over, they wandered about the valley, which Cadurcis could not sufficiently admire. Insensibly he drew Venetia from the rest of the party, on the pretence of showing her a view at some little distance. They walked along by the side of a rivulet, which glided through the hills, until they were nearly a mile from the villa, though still in sight.

"Venetia," he at length said, turning the conversa-

tion to a more interesting topic, "your father and myself have disburthened our minds to each other this morning; I think we know each other now as well as if we were as old acquaintances as myself and his daughter."

"Ah! I knew that you and papa must agree," said Venetia; "I was saying so this morning to my mother."

"Venetia," said Cadurcis, with a laughing eye, "all this is very strange, is it not?"

"Very strange, indeed, Plantagenet; I should not be surprised if it appeared to you as yet even incredible."

"It is miraculous," said Cadurcis, "but not incredible; an angel interfered, and worked the miracle. I know all."

Venetia looked at him with a faint flush upon her cheek; she gathered a flower and plucked it to pieces.

"What a singular destiny ours has been, Venetia!" said Cadurcis. "Do you know I can sit for an hour together and muse over it?"

"Can you, Plantagenet?"

"I have such an extraordinary memory; I do not think I ever forgot anything. We have had some very remarkable conversations in our time — eh, Venetia? Do you remember my visit to Cherbury before I went to Cambridge, and the last time I saw you before I left England? And now it all ends in this! What do you think of it, Venetia?"

"Think of what, Plantagenet?"

"Why, of this reconciliation?"

"Dear Plantagenet, what can I think of it but what I have expressed? — that it is a very wonderful event, but the happiest in my life."

"You are quite happy now?"

"Quite."

"I see you do not care for me the least?"

"Plantagenet, you are perverse. Are you not here?"

"Did you ever think of me when I was away?"

"You know very well, Plantagenet, that it is impossible for me to cease to be interested in you. Could I refrain from thinking of such a friend?"

"Friend! Poh! I am not your friend; and as for that, you never once mentioned my name to your father, Miss Venetia."

"You might easily conceive that there were reasons for such silence," said Venetia. "It could not arise on my part from forgetfulness or indifference; for even if my feelings were changed towards you, you are not a person that one would, or even could, avoid speaking of, especially to papa, who must have felt such interest in you! I am sure, even if I had not known you, there were a thousand occasions which would have called your name to my lips, had they been uncontrolled by other considerations."

"Come, Venetia, I am not going to submit to compliments from you," said Lord Cadurcis: "no blarney. I wish you only to think of me as you did ten years ago. I will not have our hearts polluted by the vul-

garity of fame. I want you to feel for me as you did when we were children. I will not be an object of interest, and admiration, and fiddlestick, to you; I will not submit to it."

"Well, you shall not," said Venetia laughing. "I will not admire you the least; I will only think of you as a good little boy."

"You do not love me any longer, I see that," said Plantagenet.

"Yes I do, Plantagenet."

"You do not love me so much as you did the night before I went to Eton, and we sat over the fire? Ah! how often I have thought of that night when I was at Athens!" he added in a tone of emotion.

"Dear Plantagenet," said Venetia, "do not be silly. I am in the highest spirits in the world; I am quite gay with happiness, and all because you have returned. Do not spoil my pleasure."

"Ah! Venetia, I see how it is; you have forgotten me, or worse than forgotten me."

"Well, I am sure I do not know what to say to satisfy you," said Venetia. "I think you very unreasonable, and very ungrateful too, for I have always been your friend, Plantagenet, and I am sure you know it. You sent me a message before you went abroad."

"Darling," said Lord Cadurcis, seizing her hand, "I am not ungrateful, I am not unreasonable. I adore you. You were very kind then, when all the world was against me. You shall see how I will pay them

off, the dogs! and worse than dogs, their betters far; dogs are faithful. Do you remember poor old Marmion? How we were mystified, Venetia! Little did we think then who was Marmion's godfather."

Venetia smiled; but she said, "I do not like this bitterness of yours, Plantagenet. You have no cause to complain of the world, and you magnify a petty squabble with a contemptible coterie into a quarrel with a nation. It is not a wise humour, and, if you indulge it, it will not be a happy one."

"I will do exactly what you wish on every subject," said Cadurcis, "if you will do exactly what I wish on one."

"Well!" said Venetia.

"Once you told me," said Cadurcis, "that you would not marry me without the consent of your father; then, most unfairly, you added to your conditions the consent of your mother. Now both your parents are very opportunely at hand; let us fall down upon our knees and beg their blessing."

"O! my dear Plantagenet, I think it will be much better for me never to marry. We are both happy now; let us remain so. You can live here, and I can be your sister. Will not that do?"

"No, Venetia, it will not."

"Dear Plantagenet!" said Venetia with a faltering voice, "if you knew how much I have suffered, dear Plantagenet!"

"I know it; I know all," said Cadurcis, taking her arm and placing it tenderly in his. "Now listen to

me, sweet girl; I loved you when a child, when I was unknown to the world, and unknown to myself; I loved you as a youth not utterly inexperienced in the world, and when my rising passions had taught me to speculate on the character of women; I loved you as a man, Venetia, with that world at my feet, that world which I scorn, but which I will command; I have been constant, Venetia; your heart assures you of that. You are the only being in existence who exercises over me any influence, and the influence you possess is irresistible and eternal. It springs from some deep and mysterious sympathy of blood which I cannot penetrate. It can neither be increased nor diminished by time. It is entirely independent of its action. I pretend not to love you more at this moment than when I first saw you, when you entered the terrace-room at Cherbury and touched my cheek. From that moment I was yours. I declare to you, most solemnly I declare to you, that I know not what love is except to you. The world has called me a libertine; the truth is, no other woman can command my spirit for an hour. I see through them at a glance. I read all their weakness, frivolity, vanity, affectation, as if they were touched by the revealing rod of Asmodeus. You were born to be my bride. Unite yourself with me, control my destiny, and my course shall be like the sun of yesterday; but reject me, reject me, and I devote all my energies to the infernal gods; I will pour my lava over the earth until all that remains of my fatal and exhausted nature is a black and barren cone surrounded by bitter desolation."

"Plantagenet, be calm!"

"I am perfectly calm, Venetia. You talk to me of your sufferings. What has occasioned them? A struggle against nature. Nature has now triumphed, and you are happy. What necessity was there for all this misery that has fallen on your house? Why is your father an exile? Do not you think that if your mother had chosen to exert her influence she might have prevented the most fatal part of his career? Undoubtedly despair impelled his actions as much as philosophy, though I give him credit for a pure and lofty spirit, to no man more. But not a murmur against your mother from me. She received my overtures of reconciliation last night with more than cordiality. She is your mother, Venetia, and she once was mine. Indeed, I love her; indeed, you would find that I would study her happiness. For after all, sweet, is there another woman in existence better qualified to fill the position of my mother-in-law? I could not behave unkindly to her; I could not treat her with neglect or harshness; not merely for the sake of her many admirable qualities, but from other considerations, Venetia, — considerations we never can forget. By heavens! I love your mother; I do, indeed, Venetia; I remember so many things — her last words to me, when I went to Eton. If she would only behave kindly to me, you would see what a son-in-law I should make. You would be jealous, that you should, Venetia. I can bear anything from you, Venetia, but with others, I cannot forget who I am. It makes me bitter to be treated as

Lady Annabel treated me last year in London; but a smile and a kind word and I recall all her maternal love; I do, indeed, Venetia; last night when she was kind I could have kissed her!"

Poor Venetia could not answer, her tears were flowing so plenteously. "I have told your father all, sweetest," said Cadurcis; "I concealed nothing."

"And what said he?" murmured Venetia.

"It rests with your mother. After all that has passed, he will not attempt to control your fate. And he is right. Perhaps his interference in my favour might even injure me. But there is no cause for despair; all I wanted was to come to an understanding with you; to be sure you loved me as you always have done. I will not be impatient. I will do everything to soothe and conciliate and gratify Lady Annabel; you will see how I will behave! As you say too, we are happy because we are together; and, therefore, it would be unreasonable not to be patient. I never can be sufficiently grateful for this meeting. I concluded you would be in England, though we were on our way to Milan to inquire after you. George has been a great comfort to me in all this affair, Venetia; he loves you, Venetia, almost as much as I do. I think I should have gone mad during that cursed affair in England, had it not been for George. I thought you would hate me, but when George brought me your message, I cared for nothing; and then his visit to the Lake was so devilish kind! He is a noble fellow and a true friend. My sweet, sweet Venetia, dry your eyes. Let us re-

join them with a smile. We have not been long away; I will pretend we have been violet hunting," said Cadurcis, stooping down and plucking up a handful of flowers. "Do you remember our violets at home, Venetia? Do you know, Venetia, I always fancy every human being is like some object in nature; and you always put me in mind of a violet, so fresh and sweet and delicate!"

CHAPTER VI.

"We have been exploring the happy valley," said Lord Cadurcis to Lady Annabel, "and here is our plunder," and he gave her the violets.

"You were always fond of flowers," said Lady Annabel.

"Yes, I imbibed the taste from you," said Cadurcis, gratified by the gracious remark.

He seated himself at her feet, examined and admired her work, and talked of old times, but with such infinite discretion, that he did not arouse a single painful association. Venetia was busied with her father's poems, and smiled often at the manuscript notes of Cadurcis. Lying, as usual, on the grass, and leaning his head on his left arm, Herbert was listening to Captain Cadurcis, who was endeavouring to give him a clear idea of the Bosphorus. Thus the morning wore away, until the sun drove them into the villa.

"I will show you my library, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert.

Cadurcis followed him into a spacious apartment, where he found a collection so considerable that he could not suppress his surprise. "Italian spoils chiefly," said Herbert; "a friend of mine purchased an old library at Bologna for me, and it turned out richer than I imagined: the rest are old friends that have been with me, many of them at least, at college. I brought them back with me from America, for then they were my only friends."

"Can you find Cabanis?" said Lord Cadurcis.

Herbert looked about. "It is in this neighbourhood, I imagine," he said. Cadurcis endeavoured to assist him. "What is this?" he said; "Plato!"

"I should like to read Plato at Athens," said Herbert. "My ambition now does not soar beyond such elegant fortune."

"We are all under great obligations to Plato," said Cadurcis. "I remember, when I was in London, I always professed myself his disciple, and it is astonishing what results I experienced. Platonic love was a great invention."

Herbert smiled; but, as he saw Cadurcis knew nothing about the subject, he made no reply.

"Plato says, or at least I think he says, that life is love," said Cadurcis. "I have said it myself in a very grand way too; I believe I cribbed it from you. But what does he mean? I am sure I meant nothing, but I dare say you did."

"I certainly had some meaning," said Herbert, stopping in his search, and smiling, "but I do not

know whether I expressed it. The principle of every motion, that is of all life, is desire or love: at present, I am in love with the lost volume of Cabanis, and, if it were not for the desire of obtaining it, I should not now be affording any testimony of my vitality by looking after it."

"That is very clear," said Cadurcis, "but I was thinking of love in the vulgar sense, in the shape of a petticoat. Certainly, when I am in love with a woman, I feel love is life; but, when I am out of love, which often happens, and generally very soon, I still contrive to live."

"We exist," said Herbert, "because we sympathise. If we did not sympathise with the air, we should die. But, if we only sympathised with the air, we should be in the lowest order of brutes, baser than the sloth. Mount from the sloth to the poet. It is sympathy that makes you a poet. It is your desire that the airy children of your brain should be born anew within another's, that makes you create; therefore, a misanthropical poet is a contradiction in terms."

"But when he writes a lampoon?" said Cadurcis.

"He desires that the majority, who are not lampooned, should share his hate," said Herbert.

"But Swift lampooned the species," said Cadurcis. "For my part, I think life is hatred."

"But Swift was not sincere; for he wrote the Drapier's Letters at the same time. Besides, the very fact of your abusing mankind proves that you do not hate them; it is clear that you are desirous of obtaining their

good opinion of your wit. You value them, you esteem them, you love them. Their approbation causes you to act, and makes you happy. As for sexual love," said Herbert, "of which you were speaking, its quality and duration depend upon the degree of sympathy that subsists between the two persons interested. Plato believed, and I believe with him, in the existence of a spiritual antetype of the soul, so that when we are born, there is something within us which, from the instant we live and move, thirsts after its likeness. This propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. The gratification of the senses soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call love. Love, on the contrary, is an universal thirst for a communion, not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature — intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive. He who finds his antetype, enjoys a love perfect and enduring; time cannot change it, distance cannot remove it; the sympathy is complete. He who loves an object that approaches his antetype, is proportionately happy, the sympathy is feeble or strong, as it may be. If men were properly educated, and their faculties fully developed," continued Herbert, "the discovery of the antetype would be easy; and, when the day arrives that it is a matter of course, the perfection of civilisation will be attained."

"I believe in Plato," said Lord Cadurcis, "and I think I have found my antetype. His theory accounts for what I never could understand."

CHAPTER VII.

In the course of the evening Lady Annabel requested Lord Cadurcis and his cousin to take up their quarters at the villa. Independently of the delight which such an invitation occasioned him, Cadurcis was doubly gratified by its being given by her. It was indeed her unprompted solicitation; for neither Herbert nor even Venetia, however much they desired the arrangement, was anxious to appear eager for its fulfilment. Desirous of pleasing her husband and her daughter; a little penitent as to her previous treatment of Cadurcis, now that time and strange events had combined to soften her feelings; and won by his engaging demeanour towards herself, Lady Annabel had of mere impulse resolved upon the act; and she was repaid by the general air of gaiety and content which it diffused through the circle.

Few weeks indeed passed ere her ladyship taught herself even to contemplate the possibility of an union between her daughter and Lord Cadurcis. The change which had occurred in her own feelings and position had in her estimation removed very considerable barriers to such a result. It would not become her again to urge the peculiarity of his temperament as an insuperable objection to the marriage; that was out of the question, even if the conscience of Lady Annabel herself, now that she was so happy, were perfectly free from any participation in the causes which occasioned the original estrangement between Herbert and herself.

Desirous too, as all mothers are, that her daughter should be suitably married, Lady Annabel could not shut her eyes to the very great improbability of such an event occurring, now that Venetia had as it were resigned all connection with her native country. As to her daughter marrying a foreigner, the very idea was intolerable to her; and Venetia appeared therefore to have resumed that singular and delicate position which she occupied at Cherbury in earlier years, when Lady Annabel had esteemed her connection with Lord Cadurcis so fortunate and auspicious. Moreover, while Lord Cadurcis, in birth, rank, country, and consideration, offered in every view of the case so gratifying an alliance, he was perhaps the only Englishman whose marriage into her family would not deprive her of the society of her child. Cadurcis had a great distaste for England, which he seized every opportunity to express. He continually declared that he would never return there; and his habits of seclusion and study so entirely accorded with those of her husband, that Lady Annabel did not doubt they would continue to form only one family; a prospect so engaging to her, that it would perhaps have alone removed the distrust which she had so unfortunately cherished against the admirer of her daughter; and although some of his reputed opinions occasioned her doubtless considerable anxiety, he was nevertheless very young, and far from emancipated from the beneficial influence of his early education. She was sanguine that this sheep would yet return to the fold where once he had been tended

with so much solicitude. When too she called to mind the chastened spirit of her husband, and could not refrain from feeling that, had she not quitted him, he might at a much earlier period have attained a mood so full of promise and to her so cheering, she could not resist the persuasion that, under the influence of Venetia Cadurcis might speedily free himself from the dominion of that arrogant genius to which, rather than to any serious conviction, the result of a studious philosophy, she attributed his indifference on the most important of subjects. On the whole, however, it was with no common gratification that Lady Annabel observed the strong and intimate friendship that arose between her husband and Cadurcis. They were inseparable companions. Independently of the natural sympathy between two highly imaginative minds, there were in the superior experience, the noble character, the vast knowledge, and refined taste of Herbert, charms of which Cadurcis was very susceptible. Cadurcis had not been a great reader himself, and he liked the company of one whose mind was at once so richly cultured and so deeply meditative: thus he obtained matter and spirit distilled through the alembic of another's brain. Jealousy had never had a place in Herbert's temperament; now he was insensible even to emulation. He spoke of Cadurcis as he thought — with the highest admiration; as one without a rival, and in whose power it was to obtain an imperishable fame. It was his liveliest pleasure to assist the full development of such an intellect, and to pour to him,

with a lavish hand, all the treasures of his taste, his learning, his fancy, and his meditation. His kind heart, his winning manners, his subdued and perfect temper, and the remembrance of the relation which he bore to Venetia, completed the spell which bound Cadurcis to him with all the finest feelings of his nature. It was, indeed, an intercourse peculiarly beneficial to Cadurcis, whose career had hitherto tended rather to the development of the power, than the refinement of his genius; and to whom an active communion with an equal spirit of a more matured intelligence was an incident rather to be desired than expected. Herbert and Cadurcis, therefore, spent their mornings together, sometimes in the library, sometimes wandering in the chestnut woods, sometimes sailing in the boat of the brig, for they were both fond of the sea: in these excursions, George was in general their companion. He had become a great favourite with Herbert, as with everybody else. No one managed a boat so well, although Cadurcis prided himself also on his skill in this respect; and George was so frank and unaffected, and so used to his cousin's habits, that his presence never embarrassed Herbert and Cadurcis, and they read or conversed quite at their ease, as if there were no third person to mar by his want of sympathy the full communion of their intellect. The whole circle met at dinner, and never again parted until at a late hour of night. This was a most agreeable life; Cadurcis himself, good humoured because he was happy, doubly exerted himself to ingratiate himself with Lady An-

bel, and felt every day that he was advancing. Venetia always smiled upon him, and praised him delightfully for his delightful conduct.

In the evening, Herbert would read to them the manuscript poem of Cadurcis, the fruits of his Attic residence and Grecian meditations. The poet would sometimes affect a playful bashfulness on this head, perhaps not altogether affected, and amuse Venetia, in a whisper, with his running comments; or exclaim with an arch air, "I say, Venetia, what would Mrs. Montague and the Blues give for this, eh? I can fancy Hannah More in decent ecstacies!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is an odd thing, my dear Herbert," said Cadurcis to his friend, in one of these voyages, "that destiny should have given you and me the same tutor."

"Masham!" said Herbert, smiling. "I tell you what is much more singular, my dear Cadurcis: it is, that notwithstanding being our tutor, a mitre should have fallen upon his head."

"I am heartily glad," said Cadurcis. "I like Masham very much; I really have a sincere affection for him. Do you know, during my infernal affair about those accursed Monteagles, when I went to the House of Lords, and was cut even by my own party, — think of that, the polished ruffians! — Masham was the only person who came forward and shook hands

with me, and in the most marked manner. A bishop, too! and the other side! that was good, was it not? But he would not see his old pupil snubbed; if he had waited ten minutes longer, he might have had a chance of seeing him massacred. And then they complain of my abusing England, my mother country; a step-dame, I take it."

"Masham is in politics a Tory, in religion ultra-orthodox," said Herbert. "He has nothing about him of the latitudinarian; and yet he is the most amiable man with whom I am acquainted. Nature has given him a kind and charitable heart, which even his opinions have not succeeded in spoiling."

"Perhaps that is exactly what he is saying of us two at this moment," said Cadurcis. "After all, what is truth? It changes as you change your clime or your country, it changes with the century. The truth of a hundred years ago is not the truth of the present day, and yet it may have been as genuine. Truth at Rome is not the truth of London, and both of them differ from the truth of Constantinople. For my part, I believe everything."

"Well, that is practically prudent, if it be metaphysically possible," said Herbert. "Do you know that I have always been of opinion, that Pontius Pilate has been greatly misrepresented by Lord Bacon in the quotation of his celebrated question. 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for an answer. Let us be just to Pontius Pilate; who has sins enough surely to answer for. There is no authority for the

jesting humour given by Lord Bacon. Pilate was evidently of a merciful and clement disposition; probably an Epicurean. His question referred to a declaration immediately preceding it, that he who was before him came to bear witness to the truth. Pilate inquired what truth?"

"Well, I always have a prejudice against Pontius Pilate," said Lord Cadurcis; "and I think it is from seeing him when I was a child, on an old Dutch tile fireplace at Marringhurst, dressed like a burgomaster. One cannot get over one's early impressions; but when you picture him to me as an Epicurean, he assumes a new character. I fancy him young, noble, elegant, and accomplished; crowned with a wreath and waving a goblet, and enjoying his government vastly."

"Before the introduction of Christianity," said Herbert, "the philosophic schools answered to our present religious sects. You said of a man that he was a Stoic or an Epicurean, as you say of a man now that he is a Calvinist or a Wesleyan."

"I should have liked to have known Epicurus," said Cadurcis.

"I would sooner have known him and Plato than any of the ancients," said Herbert. "I look upon Plato as the wisest and the profoundest of men, and upon Epicurus as the most humane and gentle."

"Now, how do you account for the great popularity of Aristotle in modern ages?" said Cadurcis; "and the comparative neglect of these, at least his equals? Chance, I suppose, that settles everything."

"By no means," said Herbert. "If you mean by chance an absence of accountable cause, I do not believe such a quality as chance exists. Every incident that happens, must be a link in a chain. In the present case, the monks monopolised literature, such as it might be, and they exercised their intellect only in discussing words. They, therefore, adopted Aristotle and the Peripatetics. Plato interfered with their heavenly knowledge, and Epicurus, who maintained the rights of man to pleasure and happiness, would have afforded a dangerous and seducing contrast to their dark and miserable code of morals."

"I think, of the ancients," said Cadurcis, "Alcibiades and Alexander the Great are my favourites. They were young, beautiful, and conquerors: a great combination."

"And among the moderns?" inquired Herbert.

"They don't touch my fancy," said Cadurcis. "Who are your heroes?"

"Oh! I have many; but I confess I should like to pass a day with Milton, or Sir Philip Sidney."

"Among mere literary men," said Cadurcis, "I should say, Bayle."

"And old Montaigne for me;" said Herbert.

"Well, I would fain visit him in his feudal chateau," said Cadurcis. "His is one of the books which give a spring to the mind. Of modern times, the feudal ages of Italy most interest me. I think that was a springtide of civilisation; all the fine arts flourished at the same moment."

"They ever will," said Herbert. "All the inventive arts maintain a sympathetic connection between each other, for, after all, they are only various expressions of one internal power, modified by different circumstances either of the individual or society. It was so in the age of Pericles; I mean the interval which intervened between the birth of that great man and the death of Aristotle; undoubtedly, whether considered in itself, or with reference to the effects which it produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilised man, the most memorable in the history of the world."

"And yet the age of Pericles has passed away," said Lord Cadurcis, mournfully, "and I have gazed upon the mouldering Parthenon. O! Herbert, you are a great thinker and muse deeply; solve me the problem why so unparalleled a progress was made during that period in literature and the arts, and why that progress, so rapid and so sustained, so soon received a check and became retrograde?"

"It is a problem left to the wonder and conjecture of posterity," said Herbert. "But its solution, perhaps, may principally be found in the weakness of their political institutions. Nothing of the Athenians remains except their genius; but they fulfilled their purpose. The wrecks and fragments of their subtle and profound minds obscurely suggest to us the grandeur and perfection of the whole. Their language excels every other tongue of the western world; their sculptures baffle all subsequent artists; credible witnesses assure us that their paintings were not inferior; and we are

only accustomed to consider the painters of Italy as those who have brought the art to its highest perfection, because none of the ancient pictures have been preserved. Yet of all their fine arts, it was music of which the Greeks were themselves most proud. Its traditionary effects were far more powerful than any which we experience from the compositions of our times. And now for their poetry, Cadurcis. It is in poetry, and poetry alone, that modern nations have maintained the majesty of genius. Do we equal the Greeks? Do we even excel them?"

"Let us prove the equality first," said Cadurcis. "The Greeks excelled in every species of poetry. In some we do not even attempt to rival them. We have not a single modern ode or a single modern pastoral. We have no one to place by Pindar, or the exquisite Theocritus. As for the epic, I confess myself a heretic as to Homer; I look upon the Iliad as a remnant of national songs; the wise ones agree that the Odyssey is the work of a later age. My instinct agrees with the result of their researches. I credit their conclusion. The Paradise Lost is, doubtless, a great production, but the subject is monkish. Dante is national, but he has all the faults of a barbarous age. In general the modern epic is framed upon the assumption that the Iliad is an orderly composition. They are indebted for this fallacy to Virgil, who called order out of chaos; but the Æneid, all the same, appears to me an insipid creation. And now for the drama. You will adduce Shakspeare?"

"There are passages in Dante," said Herbert, "not inferior, in my opinion, to any existing literary composition, but, as a whole, I will not make my stand on him; I am not so clear that, as a lyric poet, Petrarch may not rival the Greeks. Shakspeare I esteem of ineffable merit."

"And who is Shakspeare?" said Cadurcis. "We know of him as much as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he ever write a single whole play? I doubt it. He appears to me to have been an inspired adapter for the theatres, which were then not as good as barns. I take him to have been a botcher up of old plays. His popularity is of modern date, and it may not last; it would have surprised him marvellously. Heaven knows, at present, all that bears his name is alike admired, and a regular Shakspearian falls into ecstasies with trash which deserves a niche in the Dunciad. For my part, I abhor your irregular geniuses, and I love to listen to the little nightingale of Twickenham."

"I have often observed," said Herbert, "that writers of a very unbridled imagination themselves, admire those whom the world erroneously, in my opinion, and from a confusion of ideas, esteems correct. I am myself an admirer of Pope, though I certainly should not ever think of classing him among the great creative spirits. And you, you are the last poet in the world, Cadurcis, whom one would have fancied his votary."

"I have written like a boy," said Cadurcis. "I found the public bite, and so I baited on with tainted

meat. I have never written for fame, only for notoriety; but I am satiated; I am going to turn over a new leaf."

"For myself," said Herbert, "if I ever had the power to impress my creations on my fellow men, the inclination is gone, and perhaps the faculty is extinct. My career is over; perhaps a solitary echo from my lyre may yet, at times, linger about the world like a breeze that has lost its way. But there is a radical fault in my poetic mind, and I am conscious of it. I am not altogether void of the creative faculty, but mine is a fragmentary mind; I produce no whole. Unless you do this, you cannot last; at least, you cannot materially affect your species. But what I admire in you, Cadurcis, is that, with all the faults of youth, of which you will free yourself, your creative power is vigorous, prolific, and complete: your creations rise fast and fair, like perfect worlds."

"Well, we will not compliment each other," said Cadurcis; "for, after all, it is a miserable craft. What is poetry but a lie, and what are poets but liars?"

"You are wrong, Cadurcis," said Herbert; "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

"I see the towers of Porto Venere," said Cadurcis, directing the sail; "we shall soon be on shore. I think, too, I recognise Venetia. Ah! my dear Herbert, your daughter is a poem that beats all our inspiration!"

CHAPTER IX.

One circumstance alone cast a gloom over this happy family, and that was the approaching departure of Captain Cadurcis for England. This had been often postponed, but it could be postponed no longer. Not even the entreaties of those kind friends could any longer prevent what was inevitable. The kind heart, the sweet temper, and the lively and companionable qualities of Captain Cadurcis, had endeared him to every one; all felt that his departure would occasion a blank in their life, impossible to be supplied. It reminded the Herberts also painfully of their own situation, in regard to their native country, which they were ever unwilling to dwell upon. George talked of returning to them, but the prospect was necessarily vague; they felt that it was only one of those fanciful visions with which an affectionate spirit attempts to soothe the pang of separation. His position, his duties, all the projects of his life, bound him to England, from which, indeed, he had been too long absent. It was selfish to wish that, for their sakes, he should sink down into a mere idler in Italy; and yet, when they recollected how little his future life could be connected with their own, every one felt dispirited.

"I shall not go boating to-day," said George to Venetia; "it is my last day. Mr. Herbert and Plantagenet talk of going to Lavenza; let us take a stroll together."

Nothing can be refused to those we love on the

last day, and Venetia immediately acceded to his request. In the course of the morning, therefore, herself and George quitted the valley, in the direction of the coast towards Genoa. Many a white sail glittered on the blue waters; it was a lively and cheering scene; but both Venetia and her companion were depressed.

"I ought to be happy," said George, and sighed. "The fondest wish of my heart is attained. You remember our conversation on the Lago Maggiore, Venetia? You see I was a prophet, and you will be Lady Cadurcis yet."

"We must keep up our spirits," said Venetia; "I do not despair of our all returning to England yet. So many wonders have happened, that I cannot persuade myself that this marvel will not also occur. I am sure my uncle will do something; I have a secret idea that the Bishop is all this time working for papa; I feel assured I shall see Cherbury and Cadurcis again, and Cadurcis will be your home."

"A year ago you appeared dying, and Plantagenet was the most miserable of men," said Captain Cadurcis. "You are both now perfectly well and perfectly happy, living even under the same roof, soon, I feel, to be united, and with the cordial approbation of Lady Annabel. Your father is restored to you. Every blessing in the world seems to cluster round your roof. It is selfish for me to wear a gloomy countenance."

"Ah! dear George, you never can be selfish," said Venetia.

"Yes, I am selfish, Venetia. What else can make me sad?"

"You know how much you contribute to our happiness," said Venetia, "and you feel for our sufferings at your absence."

"No, Venetia, I feel for myself," said Captain Cadurcis with energy; "I am certain that I never can be happy, except in your society and Plantagenet's. I cannot express to you how I love you both. Nothing else gives me the slightest interest."

"You must go home and marry," said Venetia smiling. "You must marry an heiress."

"Never," said Captain Cadurcis. "Nothing shall ever induce me to marry. No! all my dreams are confined to being the bachelor uncle of the family."

"Well, now I think," said Venetia, "of all the persons I know, there is no one so qualified for domestic happiness as yourself. I think your wife, George, would be a very fortunate woman, and I only wish I had a sister, that you might marry her."

"I wish you had, Venetia; I would give up my resolution against marriage directly."

"Alas!" said Venetia, "there is always some bitter drop in the cup of life. Must you indeed go, George?"

"My present departure is inevitable," he replied; "but I have some thoughts of giving up my profession and Parliament, and then I will return, never to leave you again."

"What will Lord — say? That will never do," said Venetia. "No; I should not be content unless you

prospered in the world, George. You are made to prosper, and I should be miserable if you sacrificed your existence to us. You must go home, and you must marry, and write letters to us by every post, and tell us what a happy man you are. The best thing for you to do, would be to live with your wife at the abbey; or Cherbury, if you liked. You see I settle everything."

"I never will marry," said Captain Cadurcis, seriously.

"Yes you will," said Venetia.

"I am quite serious, Venetia. Now, mark my words, and remember this day. I never will marry. I have a reason, and a strong and good one, for my resolution."

"What is it?"

"Because my marriage will destroy the intimacy that subsists between me and yourself — and Plantagenet," he added.

"Your wife should be my friend," said Venetia.

"Happy woman!" said George.

"Let us indulge for a moment in a dream of domestic bliss," said Venetia gaily. "Papa and mamma at Cherbury; Plantagenet and myself at the abbey, where you and your wife must remain until we could build you a house; and Dr. Masham coming down to spend Christmas with us. Would it not be delightful? I only hope Plantagenet would be tame. I think he would burst out a little sometimes."

"Not with you, Venetia, not with you," said George; "you have a hold over him which nothing can ever

shake. I could always put him in an amiable mood in an instant by mentioning your name."

"I wish you knew the abbey, George," said Venetia. "It is the most interesting of all old places. I love it. You must promise me when you arrive in England to go on a pilgrimage to Cadurcis and Cherbury, and write me a long account of it."

"I will indeed; I will write to you very often."

"You shall find me a most faithful correspondent, which I dare say Plantagenet would not prove."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said George, "you have no idea of the quantity of letters he wrote me when he first quitted England. And such delightful ones! I do not think there is a more lively letter-writer in the world! His descriptions are so vivid; a few touches give you a complete picture; and then his observations, they are so playful! I assure you there is nothing in the world more easy and diverting than a letter from Plantagenet."

"If you could only see his first letter from Eton to me!" said Venetia. "I have always treasured it. It certainly was not very diverting; and if by easy you mean easy to decipher," she added laughing, "his handwriting must have improved very much lately. Dear Plantagenet, I am always afraid I never pay him sufficient respect; that I do not feel sufficient awe in his presence; but I cannot disconnect him from the playfellow of my infancy: and do you know it seems to me, whenever he addresses me, his voice and air

change, and assume quite the tone and manner of childhood."

"I have never known him but as a great man," said Captain Cadurcis, "but he was so frank and simple with me from the very first, that I cannot believe that it is not two years since we first met."

"Ah! I shall never forget that night at Ranelagh," said Venetia, half with a smile and half with a sigh. "How interesting he looked! I loved to see people stare at him, and to hear them whisper his name."

Here they seated themselves by a fountain, overshadowed by a plane-tree, and for a while talked only of Plantagenet.

"All the dreams of my life have come to pass," said Venetia. "I remember when I was at Weymouth, ill and not very happy, I used to roam about the sands, thinking of papa, and how I wished Plantagenet was like him, a great man, a great poet, whom all the world admired. Little did I think that before a year had passed, Plantagenet, my unknown Plantagenet, would be the admiration of England; little did I think another year would pass, and I should be living with my father and Plantagenet together, and they should be bosom friends. You see, George, we must never despair."

"Under this bright sun," said Captain Cadurcis, "one is naturally sanguine, but think of me alone and in gloomy England."

"It is indeed a bright sun," said Venetia; "how wonderful to wake every morning and be sure of meeting its beam!"

Captain Cadurcis looked around him with a sailor's eye. Over the Apennines towards Genoa, there was a ridge of dark clouds piled up with such compactness, that they might have been mistaken in a hasty survey for part of the mountains themselves.

"Bright as is the sun," said Captain Cadurcis, "we may have yet a squall before night."

"I was delighted with Venice," said his companion, not noticing his observation; "I think of all places in the world it is one which Plantagenet would most admire. I cannot believe but that even his delicious Athens would yield to it."

"He did lead the oddest life at Athens you can conceive," said Captain Cadurcis. "The people did not know what to make of him. He lived in the Latin Convent, a fine building which he had almost to himself, for there are not half a dozen monks. He used to pace up and down the terrace which he had turned into a garden, and on which he kept all sorts of strange animals. He wrote continually there. Indeed he did nothing but write. His only relaxation was a daily ride to Piræus, about five miles over the plain; he told me it was the only time in his life he was ever contented with himself except when he was at Cherbury. He always spoke of London with disgust."

"Plantagenet loves retirement and a quiet life," said Venetia; "but he must not be marred with vulgar sights, and common-place duties. That is the secret with him."

"I think the wind has just changed," said Captain

Cadurcis. "It seems to me that we shall have a sirocco. There, it shifts again! We shall have a sirocco for certain."

"What did you think of papa when you first saw him?" said Venetia. "Was he the kind of person you expected to see?"

"Exactly," said Captain Cadurcis. "So very spiritual! Plantagenet said to me, as we went home the first night, that he looked like a golden phantom. I think him very like you, Venetia; indeed there can be no doubt you inherited your face from your father."

"Ah! if you had seen his portrait at Cherbury, when he was only twenty!" said Venetia. "That was a golden phantom, or rather he looked like Hyperion. What are you staring at so, George?"

"I do not like this wind," muttered Captain Cadurcis. "There it goes."

"You cannot see the wind, George?"

"Yes, I can, Venetia, and I do not like it at all. Do you see that black spot flitting like a shade over the sea? It is like the reflection of a cloud on the water; but there is no cloud. Well, that is the wind, Venetia, and a very wicked wind too."

"How strange! Is that indeed the wind?"

"We had better return home," said Captain Cadurcis. "I wish they had not gone to Lavenza."

"But there is no danger?" said Venetia.

"Danger? No! no danger, but they may get a wet jacket."

They walked on; but Captain Cadurcis was rather

distrait: his eye was always watching the wind; at last he said, "I tell you, Venetia, we must walk quickly; for, by Jove, we are going to have a white squall."

They hurried their pace, Venetia mentioned her alarm again about the boat, but her companion reassured her: yet his manner was not so confident as his words.

A white mist began to curl above the horizon, the blueness of the day seemed suddenly to fade, and its colour became grey; there was a swell on the waters that hitherto had been quite glassy, and they were covered with a scurfy foam.

"I wish I had been with them," said Captain Cadurcis, evidently very anxious.

"George, you are alarmed," said Venetia, earnestly. "I am sure there is danger."

"Danger! How can there be danger, Venetia? Perhaps they are in port by this time. I dare say we shall find them at Spezzia. I will see you home and run down to them. Only hurry, for your own sake, for you do not know what a white squall in the Mediterranean is. We have but a few moments."

And even at this very instant, the wind came roaring and rushing with such a violent gush that Venetia could scarcely stand; George put his arm round her to support her. The air was filled with thick white vapour, so that they could no longer see the ocean, only the surf rising very high all along the coast.

"Keep close to me, Venetia," said Captain Cadurcis; "hold my arm and I will walk first, for we shall not

be able to see a yard before us in a minute. I know where we are. We are above the olive wood, and we shall soon be in the ravine. These Mediterranean white squalls are nasty things; I had sooner by half be in a south-wester; for one cannot run before the wind in this bay, the reefs stretch such a long way out."

The danger, and the inutility of expressing fears which could only perplex her guide, made Venetia silent, but she was terrified. She could not divest herself of apprehension about her father and Plantagenet. In spite of all he said, it was evident that her companion was alarmed.

They had now entered the valley: the mountains had in some degree kept off the vapour; the air was more clear. Venetia and Captain Cadurcis stopped a moment to breathe. "Now, Venetia, you are safe," said Captain Cadurcis. "I will not come in; I will run down to the bay at once." He wiped the mist off his face: Venetia perceived him deadly pale.

"George," she said, "conceal nothing from me; there is danger, imminent danger. Tell me at once."

"Indeed, Venetia," said Captain Cadurcis, "I am sure everything will be quite right. There is some danger, certainly, at this moment, but of course, long ago, they have run into harbour. I have no doubt they are at Spezzia at this moment. Now, do not be alarmed: indeed there is no cause. God bless you!" he said, and bounded away. "No cause," thought he to himself, as the wind sounded like thunder, and the vapour came rushing up the ravine. "God grant I

may be right: but neither between the Tropics nor on the Line have I witnessed a severer squall than this! What open boat can live in this weather! Oh! that I had been with them! I shall never forgive myself!"

CHAPTER X.

VENETIA found her mother walking up and down the room, as was her custom when she was agitated. She hurried to her daughter. "You must change your dress instantly, Venetia," said Lady Annabel. "Where is George?"

"He has gone down to Spezzia to papa and Plantagenet; it is a white squall; it comes on very suddenly in this sea. He ran down to Spezzia instantly, because he thought they would be wet," said the agitated Venetia, speaking with rapidity and trying to appear calm.

"Are they at Spezzia?" inquired Lady Annabel quickly.

"George has no doubt they are, mother," said Venetia.

"No doubt!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, in great distress: "God grant they may be only wet."

"Dearest mother," said Venetia, approaching her, but speech deserted her. She had advanced to encourage Lady Annabel, but her own fear checked the words on her lips.

"Change your dress, Venetia," said Lady Annabel;

"lose no time in doing that. I think I will send down to Spezzia at once."

"That is useless now, dear mother, for George is there."

"Go, dearest," said Lady Annabel; "I dare say, we have no cause for fear, but I am exceedingly alarmed about your father, about them: I am, indeed. I do not like these sudden squalls, and I never liked this boating; indeed, I never did. George being with them reconciled me to it. Now go, Venetia, go, my love."

Venetia quitted the room. She was so agitated that she made Pauncefort a confidant of her apprehensions.

"La! my dear miss," said Mistress Pauncefort, "I should never have thought of such a thing! Do not you remember what the old man said at Weymouth, 'there is many a boat will live in a rougher sea than a ship;' and it is such an unlikely thing, it is indeed, Miss Venetia. I am certain sure my lord can manage a boat as well as a common sailor, and master is hardly less used to it than he. La! miss, don't make yourself nervous about any such preposterous ideas. And I dare say you will find them in the saloon when you go down again. Really I should not wonder. I think you had better wear your twill dress; I have put the new trimming on."

They had not returned when Venetia joined her mother. That indeed she could scarcely expect. But in about half an hour, a message arrived from Captain Cadurcis that they were not at Spezzia, but from something he had heard, he had no doubt they were at

Sarzana, and he was going to ride on there at once. He felt sure, however, from what he had heard they were at Sarzana. This communication afforded Lady Annabel a little ease, but Venetia's heart misgave her. She recalled the alarm of George in the morning which it was impossible for him to disguise, and she thought she recognised in this hurried message and vague assurances of safety something of the same apprehension, and the same fruitless efforts to conceal it.

Now came the time of terrible suspense. Sarzana was nearly twenty miles distant from Spezzia. The evening must arrive before they could receive intelligence from Captain Cadurcis. In the mean time the squall died away; the heavens became again bright, and though the waves were still tumultuous the surf was greatly decreased. Lady Annabel had already sent down more than one messenger to the bay, but they brought no intelligence — she resolved now to go herself, that she might have the satisfaction of herself cross-examining the fishermen who had been driven in from various parts by stress of weather. She would not let Venetia accompany her, who, she feared, might already suffer from the exertions and rough weather of the morning. This was a most anxious hour, and yet the absence of her mother was in some degree a relief to Venetia; it at least freed her from the perpetual effort of assumed composure. While her mother remained, Venetia had affected to read, though her eye wandered listlessly over the page, or to draw, though the pencil trembled in her hand; anything which might

guard her from conveying to her mother that she shared the apprehensions which had already darkened her mother's mind. But now that Lady Annabel was gone, Venetia, muffling herself up in her shawl, threw herself on a sofa, and there she remained without a thought, her mind a chaos of terrible images.

Her mother returned, and with a radiant countenance. Venetia sprang from the sofa. "There is good news; O mother! have they returned?"

"They are not at Spezzia," said Lady Annabel, throwing herself into a chair panting for breath; "but there is good news. You see I was right to go, Venetia. These stupid people we send only ask questions, and take the first answer. I have seen a fisherman, and he says he heard that two persons, Englishmen he believes, have put into Lerici in an open boat."

"God be praised!" said Venetia. "O mother, I can now confess to you the terror I have all along felt."

"My own heart assures me of it, my child," said Lady Annabel weeping; and they mingled their tears together, but tears not of sorrow.

"Poor George!" said Lady Annabel, "he will have a terrible journey to Sarzana, and be feeling so much for us! Perhaps he may meet them."

"I feel assured he will," said Venetia; "and perhaps ere long they will all three be here again. Joy! joy!"

"They must never go in that boat again," said Lady Annabel.

"O! they never will, dearest mother, if you ask them not," said Venetia.

"We will send to Lerici," said Lady Annabel.

"Instantly," said Venetia; "but I dare say they have already sent us a messenger."

"No!" said Lady Annabel; "men treat the danger that is past very lightly. We shall not hear from them except in person."

Time now flew more lightly. They were both easy in their minds. The messenger was despatched to Lerici; but even Lerici was a considerable distance, and hours must elapse before his return. Still there was the hope of seeing them, or hearing from them in the interval.

"I must go out, dear mother," said Venetia. "Let us both go out. It is now very fine. Let us go just to the Ravine, for indeed it is impossible to remain here."

Accordingly they both went forth, and took up a position on the coast which commanded a view on all sides. All was radiant again, and comparatively calm. Venetia looked upon the sea, and said, "Ah! I never shall forget a white squall in the Mediterranean, for all this splendour."

It was sunset: they returned home. No news yet from Lerici. Lady Annabel grew uneasy again. The pensive and melancholy hour encouraged gloom; but Venetia, who was sanguine, encouraged her mother.

"Suppose they were not Englishmen in the boat," said Lady Annabel.

"It is impossible, mother. What other two persons

in this neighbourhood could have been in an open boat? Besides, the man said Englishmen. You remember, he said Englishmen. You are quite sure he did? It must be they. I feel as convinced of it as of your presence."

"I think there can be no doubt," said Lady Annabel. "I wish that the messenger would return."

The messenger did return. No two persons in an open boat had put into Lerici; but a boat, like the one described, with every stitch of canvass set, had passed Lerici just before the squall commenced, and, the people there doubted not, had made Sarzana.

Lady Annabel turned pale, but Venetia was still sanguine. "They are at Sarzana," she said; "they must be at Sarzana; you see George was right. He said he was sure they were at Sarzana. Besides, dear mother, he heard they were at Sarzana."

"And we heard they were at Lerici," said Lady Annabel in a melancholy tone.

"And so they were, dear mother; it all agrees. The accounts are very consistent. Do not you see how very consistent they are? They were seen at Lerici, and were off Lerici, but they made Sarzana; and George heard they were at Sarzana. I am certain they are at Sarzana: I feel quite easy; I feel as easy as if they were here. They are safe at Sarzana. But it is too far to return to-night. We shall see them at breakfast to-morrow, — all three."

"Venetia, dearest! do not you sit up," said her mother. "I think there is a chance of George return-

ing; I feel assured he will send to-night; but late, of course. Go, dearest, and sleep."

"Sleep!" thought Venetia to herself; but to please her mother she retired.

"Good-night, my child," said Lady Annabel. "The moment any one arrives, you shall be aroused."

CHAPTER XI.

VENETIA, without undressing, lay down on her bed, watching for some sound that might give her hope of George's return. Dwelling on every instant, the time dragged heavily along, and she thought that the night had half passed when Pauncefort entered her room, and she learnt, to her surprise, that only an hour had elapsed since she had parted from her mother. This entrance of Pauncefort had given Venetia a momentary hope that they had returned.

"I assure you, Miss Venetia, it is only an hour," said Pauncefort, "and nothing could have happened. Now do try to go to sleep, that is a dear young lady, for I am certain sure that they will all return in the morning, as I am here. I was telling my lady just now, I said, says I, I dare say they are all very wet, and very fatigued."

"They would have returned, Pauncefort," said Venetia, "or they would have sent. They are not at Sarzana."

"La! Miss Venetia, why should they be at Sarzana?

Why should they not have gone much farther on! For, as Vicenzo was just saying to me, and Vicenzo knows all about the coast, with such a wind as this, I should not be surprised if they were at Leghorn."

"Oh! Pauncefort," said Venetia, "I am sick at heart!"

"Now really, Miss Venetia, do not take on so!" said Pauncefort; "for do not you remember when his lordship ran away from the abbey, and went a gipsying, nothing would persuade poor Mrs. Cadurcis that he was not robbed and murdered, and yet you see he was as safe and sound all the time, as if he had been at Cherbury."

"Does Vicenzo really think they could have reached Leghorn?" said Venetia, clinging to every fragment of hope.

"He is morally sure of it, Miss Venetia," said Pauncefort, "and I feel quite as certain, for Vicenzo is always right."

"I had confidence about Sarzana," said Venetia; "I really did believe they were at Sarzana. If only Captain Cadurcis would return; if he only would return, and say they were not at Sarzana, I would try to believe they were at Leghorn."

"Now, Miss Venetia," said Pauncefort, "I am certain sure that they are quite safe; for my lord is a very good sailor; he is, indeed; all the men say so; and the boat is as seaworthy a boat as boat can be. There is not the slightest fear, I do assure you, Miss."

"Do the men say that Plantagenet is a good sailor?" inquired Venetia.

"Quite professional!" said Mistress Pauncefort; "and can command a ship as well as the best of them. They all say that."

"Hush! Pauncefort, I hear something."

"It's only my lady, Miss. I know her step."

"Is my mother going to bed?" said Venetia.

"Yes," said Pauncefort, "my lady sent me here to see after you. I wish I could tell her you were asleep."

"It is impossible to sleep," said Venetia, rising up from the bed, withdrawing the curtain, and looking at the sky. "What a peaceful night! I wish my heart were like the sky. I think I will go to mamma, Pauncefort!"

"Oh! dear, Miss Venetia, I am sure I think you had better not. If you and my lady, now, would only just go to sleep, and forget everything till morning, it would be much better for you. Besides, I am sure if my lady knew you were not gone to bed already, it would only make her doubly anxious. Now, really, Miss Venetia, do take my advice, and just lie down again. You may be sure the moment any one arrives I will let you know. Indeed, I shall go and tell my lady that you are lying down, as it is, and very drowsy;" and, so saying, Mistress Pauncefort caught up her candle, and bustled out of the room.

Venetia took up the volume of her father's poems, which Cadurcis had filled with his notes. How little

did Plantagenet anticipate, when he thus expressed at Athens the passing impressions of his mind, that ere a year had glided away, his fate would be so intimately blended with that of Herbert! It was impossible, however, for Venetia to lose herself in a volume which under any other circumstances might have compelled her spirit; the very associations with the writers added to the terrible restlessness of her mind. She paused each instant to listen for the wished-for sound, but a mute stillness reigned throughout the house and household. There was something in this deep, unbroken silence, at a moment when anxiety was universally diffused among the dwellers beneath that roof, and the heart of more than one of them was throbbing with all the torture of the most awful suspense, that fell upon Venetia's excited nerves with a very painful and even insufferable influence. She longed for sound — for some noise that might assure her she was not the victim of a trance. She closed her volume with energy, and she started at the sound she had herself created. She rose and opened the door of her chamber very softly, and walked into the vestibule. There were caps, and cloaks, and whips, and canes of Cadurcis and her father, lying about in familiar confusion. It seemed impossible but that they were sleeping, as usual, under the same roof. And where were they? That she should live and be unable to answer that terrible question! When she felt the utter helplessness of all her strong sympathy towards them, it seemed to her that she must go mad. She gazed around her with a wild and vacant

stare. At the bottom of her heart there was a fear maturing into conviction too horrible for expression. She returned to her own chamber, and the exhaustion occasioned by her anxiety, and the increased coolness of the night, made her at length drowsy. She threw herself on the bed, and slumbered.

She started in her sleep — she awoke — she dreamed they had come home. She rose and looked at the progress of the night. The night was waning fast; a grey light was on the landscape; the point of day approached. Venetia stole softly to her mother's room, and entered it with a soundless step. Lady Annabel had not retired to bed. She had sat up the whole night, and was now asleep. A lamp on a small table was burning at her side, and she held, firmly grasped in her hand, the letter of her husband, which he had addressed to her at Venice, and which she had been evidently reading. A tear glided down the cheek of Venetia as she watched her mother retaining that letter with fondness even in her sleep, and when she thought of all the misery, and heartaches, and harrowing hours that had preceded its receipt, and which Venetia believed that letter had cured for ever. What misery awaited them now? Why were they watchers of the night? She shuddered when these dreadful questions flitted through her mind. She shuddered and sighed. Her mother started, and woke.

"Who is there?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"Venetia."

"My child, have you not slept?"

"Yes, mother, and I woke refreshed, as I hope you do."

"I wake with trust in God's mercy," said Lady Annabel. "Tell me the hour?"

"It is just upon dawn, mother."

"Dawn! no one has returned, or come?"

"The house is still, mother."

"I would you were in bed, my child."

"Mother, I can sleep no more. I wish to be with you;" — and Venetia seated herself at her mother's feet, and reclined her head upon her mother's knee.

"I am glad the night has passed, Venetia," said Lady Annabel, in a suppressed yet solemn tone. "It has been a trial." And here she placed the letter in her bosom. Venetia could only answer with a sigh.

"I wish Pauncefort would come," said Lady Annabel; "and yet I do not like to rouse her, she was up so late, poor creature! If it be the dawn I should like to send out messengers again; something may be heard at Spezzia."

"Vicenzo thinks they have gone to Leghorn, mother."

"Has he heard anything?" said Lady Annabel, eagerly.

"No, but he is an excellent judge," said Venetia, repeating all Pauncefort's consolatory chatter; "he knows the coast so well. He says he is sure the wind would carry them on to Leghorn; and that accounts, you know, mother, for George not returning. They are all at Leghorn."

"Would that George would return," murmured Lady Annabel; "I wish I could see again that sailor who said they were at Lerici. He was an intelligent man."

"Perhaps if we send down to the bay he may be there," said Venetia.

"Hush! I hear a step!" said Lady Annabel.

Venetia sprung up and opened the door, but it was only Pauncefort in the vestibule.

"The household are all up, my lady," said that important personage entering; "'tis a beautiful morning. Vicenzo has run down to the bay, my lady; I sent him off immediately. Vicenzo says he is certain sure they are at Leghorn, my lady — and this time three years, the very same thing happened. They were fishing for anchovies, my lady, close by, my lady, near Sarzana — two young men, or rather one about the same age as master, and one like my lord — cousins, my lady, and just in the same sort of boat, my lady; and there came on a squall, just the same sort of squall, my lady, and they did not return home; and every one was frightened out of their wits, my lady, and their wives and families quite distracted — and after all they were at Leghorn; for this sort of wind always takes your open boats to Leghorn, Vicenzo says."

The sun rose, the household were all stirring, and many of them abroad; the common routine of domestic duty seemed, by some general yet not expressed understanding, to have ceased. The ladies descended below at a very early hour, and went forth into the valley,

once the happy valley. What was to be its future denomination? Vicenzo returned from the bay, and he contrived to return with cheering intelligence. The master of a felucca who, in consequence of the squall had put in at Lerici, and in the evening dropped down to Spezzia, had met an open boat an hour before he reached Sarzana, and was quite confident that if it had put into port, it must have been, from the speed at which it was going, a great distance down the coast. No wrecks had been heard of in the neighbourhood. This intelligence, the gladsome time of day, and the non-arrival of Captain Cadurcis, which according to their mood was always a circumstance that counted either for good or for evil, and the sanguine feelings which make us always cling to hope, altogether reassured our friends; Venetia dismissed from her mind the dark thought which for a moment had haunted her in the noon of night; and still it was a suspense, a painful agitating suspense, but only suspense that yet influenced them.

"Time!" said Lady Annabel. "Time! we must wait."

Venetia consoled her mother; she affected even a gaiety of spirit; she was sure that Vicenzo would turn out to be right, after all; Pauncefort said he always was right, and that they were at Leghorn.

The day wore apace; the noon arrived and passed; it was even approaching sunset. Lady Annabel was almost afraid to counterorder the usual meals, lest Venetia should comprehend her secret terror; the very

same sentiment influenced Venetia. Thus they both had submitted to the ceremony of breakfast, but when the hour of dinner approached they neither could endure the mockery. They looked at each other, and almost at the same time they proposed that, instead of dining, they should walk down to the bay.

"I trust we shall at least hear something before the night," said Lady Annabel. "I confess I dread the coming night. I do not think I could endure it."

"The longer we do not hear, the more certain I am of their being at Leghorn," said Venetia.

"I have a great mind to travel there to-night," said Lady Annabel.

As they were stepping into the portico, Venetia recognised Captain Cadurcis in the distance. She turned pale; she would have fallen had she not leaned on her mother, who was not so advanced, and who had not seen him.

"What is the matter, Venetia?" said Lady Annabel, alarmed.

"He is here, he is here!"

"Marmion?"

"No, George. Let me sit down."

Her mother tried to support her to a chair. Lady Annabel took off her bonnet. She had not strength to walk forth. She could not speak. She sat down opposite Venetia, and her countenance pictured distress to so painful a degree, that at any other time Venetia would have flown to her, but in this crisis of suspense

it was impossible. George was in sight; he was in the portico; he was in the room.

He looked wan, haggard, and distracted. More than once he essayed to speak, but failed.

Lady Annabel looked at him with a strange, delirious expression. Venetia rushed forward and seized his arm, and gazed intently on his face. He shrank from her glance; his frame trembled.

CHAPTER XII.

In the heart of the tempest Captain Cadurcis traced his way in a sea of vapour with extreme danger and difficulty to the shore. On his arrival at Spezzia, however, scarcely a house was visible, and the only evidence of the situation of the place was the cessation of an immense white surf which otherwise indicated the line of the sea, but the absence of which proved his contiguity to a harbour. In the thick fog he heard the cries and shouts of the returning fishermen, and of their wives and children responding from the land to their exclamations. He was forced, therefore, to wait at Spezzia in an agony of impotent suspense until the fury of the storm was over and the sky was partially cleared. At length the objects became gradually less obscure; he could trace the outline of the houses, and catch a glimpse of the water half a mile out, and soon the old castles which guard the entrance of the strait that leads into the gulf, looming in the distance, and

now and then a group of human beings in the vanishing vapour. Of these he made some inquiries, but in vain, respecting the boat and his friends. He then made the brig, but could learn nothing except their departure in the morning. He at length obtained a horse and galloped along the coast towards Lerici, keeping a sharp look out as he proceeded, and stopping at every village in his progress for intelligence. When he had arrived in the course of three hours at Lerici, the storm had abated, the sky was clear, and no evidence of the recent squall remained except the agitated state of the waves. At Lerici he could hear nothing, so he hurried on to Sarzana, where he learnt for the first time that an open boat, with its sails set, had passed more than an hour before the squall commenced. From Sarzana he hastened on to Lavenza, a little port, the nearest sea-point to Massa, and where the Carrara marble is shipped for England. Here also his inquiries were fruitless, and, exhausted by his exertions, he dismounted and rested at the inn, not only for repose, but to consider over the course which he should now pursue. The boat had not been seen off Lavenza, and the idea that they had made the coast towards Leghorn now occurred to him. His horse was so wearied that he was obliged to stop some time at Lavenza, for he could procure no other mode of conveyance; the night also was fast coming on, and to proceed to Leghorn by this dangerous route at this hour was impossible. At Lavenza therefore he remained, resolved to hasten to Leghorn at break of day. This was a most awful

night. Although physically exhausted, Captain Cadurcis could not sleep, and after some vain efforts, he quitted his restless bed on which he had laid down without undressing, and walked forth to the harbour. Between anxiety for Herbert and his cousin, and for the unhappy women whom he had left behind, he was nearly distracted. He gazed on the sea, as if some sail in sight might give him a chance of hope. His professional experience assured him of all the danger of the squall. He could not conceive how an open boat could live in such a sea, and an instant return to port so soon as the squall commenced, appeared the only chance of its salvation. Could they have reached Leghorn? It seemed impossible. There was no hope they could now be at Sarzana, or Lerici. When he contemplated the full contingency of what might have occurred his mind wandered and refused to comprehend the possibility of the terrible conclusion. He thought the morning would never break.

There was a cavernous rock by the sea-shore, that jutted into the water like a small craggy promontory. Captain Cadurcis climbed to its top, and then descending, reclined himself upon an inferior portion of it, which formed a natural couch with the wave on each side. There, lying at his length, he gazed upon the moon and stars whose brightness he thought would never dim. The Mediterranean is a tideless sea, but the swell of the waves, which still set in to the shore, bore occasionally masses of sea-weed and other marine formations, and deposited them around him, plashing,

as it broke against the shore, with a melancholy and monotonous sound. The abstraction of the scene, the hour, and the surrounding circumstances, brought, however, no refreshment to the exhausted spirit of George Cadurcis. He could not think, indeed he did not dare to think; but the villa of the Apennines, and the open boat in the squall flitted continually before him. His mind was feeble, though excited, and he fell into a restless and yet unmeaning reverie. So long as he had been in action, so long as he had been hurrying along the coast, the excitement of motion, the constant exercise of his senses, had relieved or distracted the intolerable suspense. But this pause — this inevitable pause overwhelmed him. It oppressed his spirit, like eternity. And yet what might the morning bring? He almost wished that he might remain for ever on this rock, watching the moon and stars, and that the life of the world might never recommence.

He started, he had fallen into a light slumber, he had been dreaming, he thought he had heard the voice of Venetia calling him; he had forgotten where he was; he stared at the sea and sky, and recalled his dreadful consciousness. The wave broke with a heavy plash that attracted his attention; it was, indeed, that sound that had awakened him. He looked around; there was some object; he started wildly from his resting-place, sprang over the cavern, and bounded on the beach. It was a corpse; he is kneeling by its side. It is the corpse of his cousin! Lord Cadurcis was a fine swimmer, and had evidently made strong

efforts for his life, for he was partly undressed. In all the insanity of hope, still wilder than despair, George Cadurcis seized the body and bore it some yards upon the shore. Life had been long extinct. The corpse was cold and stark, the eyes closed, an expression of energy, however, yet lingering in the fixed jaw, and the hair sodden with the sea. Suddenly Captain Cadurcis rushed to the inn and roused the household. With a distracted air, and broken speech and rapid motion, he communicated the catastrophe. Several persons, some bearing torches, others blankets and cordials, followed him instantly to the fatal spot. They hurried to the body, they applied all the rude remedies of the moment, rather from the impulse of nervous excitement than with any practical purpose; for the case had been indeed long hopeless. While Captain Cadurcis leant over the body, chafing the extremities in a hurried frenzy, and gazing intently on the countenance, a shout was heard from one of the stragglers, who had recently arrived. The sea had washed on the beach another corpse: the form of Marmion Herbert! It would appear that he had made no struggle to save himself, for his hand was locked in his waistcoat, where, at the moment, he had thrust the Phædo, showing that he had been reading to the last, and was meditating on immortality when he died.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

It was the commencement of autumn. The verdure of summer still lingered on the trees, the sky if not so cloudless was almost as refulgent as Italy; and the pigeons, bright and glancing, clustered on the roof of the hall of Cherbury. The steward was in attendance; the household, all in deep mourning, were assembled; everything was in readiness for the immediate arrival of Lady Annabel Herbert.

"'Tis nearly four years come Martinmas," said the grey-headed butler, "since my Lady left us."

"And no good has come of it," said the housekeeper. "And for my part I never heard of good coming from going to foreign parts."

"I shall like to see Miss Venetia again," said a housemaid. "Bless her sweet face!"

"I never expected to see her Miss Venetia again from all we heard," said a footman.

"God's will be done!" said the grey-headed butler, "but I hope she will find happiness at home. 'Tis

nigh on twenty years since I first nursed her in these arms."

"I wonder if there is any new Lord Cadurcis," said the footman. "I think he was the last of the line."

"It would have been a happy day if I had lived to have seen the poor young Lord marry Miss Venetia," said the housekeeper. "I always thought that match was made in heaven."

"He was a sweet-spoken young gentleman," said the housemaid.

"For my part," said the footman, "I should like to have seen our real master, Squire Herbert. He was a famous gentleman by all accounts."

"I wish they had lived quietly at home," said the housekeeper.

"I shall never forget the time when my Lord returned," said the grey-headed butler. "I must say I thought it was a match."

"Mistress Pauncefort seemed to think so," said the housemaid.

"And she understands those things," said the footman.

"I see the carriage," said a servant who was at a window in the hall. All immediately bustled about, and the housekeeper sent a message to the steward.

The carriage might be just discovered at the end of the avenue. It was some time before it entered the iron gates that were thrown open for its reception.

The steward stood on the steps with his hat off, the servants were ranged in order at the entrance. Touching their horses with the spur, and cracking their whips, the postilions dashed round the circular plot and stopped at the hall-door. Under any circumstances a return home after an interval of years is rather an awful moment; there was not a servant who was not visibly affected. On the outside of the carriage was a foreign servant and Mistress Pauncefort, who was not so profuse as might have been expected in her recognitions of her old friends; her countenance was graver than of yore. Misfortune and misery had subdued even Mistress Pauncefort. The foreign servant opened the door of the carriage; a young man, who was a stranger to the household, but who was in deep mourning, alighted, and then Lady Annabel appeared. The steward advanced to welcome her, the household bowed and curtsied. She smiled on them for a moment graciously and kindly, but her countenance immediately reassumed a serious air, and whispering one word to the strange gentleman, she entered the hall alone, inviting the steward to follow her.

"I hope your ladyship is well — welcome home, my Lady — welcome again to Cherbury — a welcome return, my Lady — hope Miss Venetia is quite well — happy to see your ladyship amongst us again, and Miss Venetia too, my Lady." Lady Annabel acknowledged these salutations with kindness, and then, saying that Miss Herbert was not very well and was fatigued with her journey, she dismissed her humble but trusty

friends. Lady Annabel then turned and nodded to her fellow traveller.

Upon this Lord Cadurcis — if we must, indeed, use a title from which he himself shrank — carried a shrouded form in his arms into the hall, where the steward alone lingered, though withdrawn to the back part of the scene; and Lady Annabel, advancing to meet him, embraced his treasured burthen — her own unhappy child.

"Now, Venetia — dearest Venetia," she said, "'tis past; we are at home."

Venetia leant upon her mother, but made no reply.

"Up stairs, dearest," said Lady Annabel; "a little exertion, a very little." Leaning on her mother and Lord Cadurcis, Venetia ascended the staircase, and they reached the terrace-room. Venetia looked around her as she entered the chamber, — that scene of her former life, endeared to her by so many happy hours and so many sweet incidents; that chamber where she had first seen Plantagenet. Lord Cadurcis supported her to a chair, and then, overwhelmed by irresistible emotion, she sank back in a swoon.

No one was allowed to enter the room but Pauncefort. They revived her; Lord Cadurcis holding her hand, and touching, with a watchful finger, her pulse. Venetia opened her eyes, and looked around her. Her mind did not wander; she recognised where she was, and recollected all that had happened. She faintly smiled, and said, in a low voice, "You are all too kind,

and I am very weak. After our trials, what is this? George," she added, struggling to appear animated, "you are at length at Cherbury."

Once more at Cherbury! It was, indeed, an event that recalled a thousand associations. In the wild anguish of her first grief, when the dreadful intelligence was broken to her, if any one had whispered to Venetia that she would yet find herself once more at Cherbury, she would have esteemed the intimation as mockery. But time and hope will struggle with the most poignant affliction, and their influence is irresistible and inevitable. From her darkened chamber in their Mediterranean villa, Venetia had again come forth, and crossed mountains, and traversed immense plains, and journeyed through many countries. She could not die, as she had supposed at first that she must, and therefore she had exerted herself to quit, and to quit speedily, a scene so terrible as their late abode. She was the very first to propose their return to England, and to that spot where she had passed her early life, and where she now wished to fulfil, in quiet and seclusion, the allotment of her remaining years; to meditate over the marvellous past, and cherish its sweet and bitter recollections. The native firmness of Lady Annabel, her long exercised control over her emotions, the sadness and subdued tone which the early incidents of her career had cast over her character, her profound sympathy with her daughter, and that religious consolation which never deserted her, had alike impelled and enabled her to bear up against the catastrophe with more fortitude

than her child. The arrow, indeed, had struck Venetia with a double barb. She was the victim; and all the cares of Lady Annabel had been directed to soothe and support this stricken lamb. Yet perhaps these unhappy women must have sunk under their unparalleled calamities, had it not been for the devotion of their companion. In the despair of his first emotions, George Cadurcis was nearly plunging himself headlong into the wave that had already proved so fatal to his house. But when he thought of Lady Annabel and Venetia in a foreign land, without a single friend in their desolation, and pictured them to himself with the dreadful news abruptly communicated by some unfeeling stranger; and called upon, in the midst of their overwhelming agony, to attend to all the heart-rending arrangements which the discovery of the bodies of beings to whom they were devoted, and in whom all their feelings were centred, must necessarily entail upon them — he recoiled from what he contemplated, as an act of infamous desertion. He resolved to live; if only to preserve them from all their impending troubles, and with the hope that his exertions might tend, in however slight a degree, not to alleviate — for that was impossible — but to prevent the increase of that terrible woe, the very conception of which made his brain stagger. He carried the bodies, therefore, with him to Spezzia, and then prepared for that fatal interview, the commencement of which we first indicated. Yet it must be confessed that, though the bravest of men, his courage faltered as he entered the accustomed ravine. He

stopped and looked down on the precipice below; he felt it utterly impossible to meet them; his mind nearly deserted him. Death, some great and universal catastrophe, an earthquake, a deluge, that would have buried them all in an instant and a common fate, would have been hailed by George Cadurcis, at that moment, as good fortune.

He lurked about the ravine for nearly three hours before he could summon up heart for the awful interview. The position he had taken assured him that no one could approach the villa, to which he himself dared not advance. At length, in a paroxysm of energetic despair, he had rushed forward, met them instantly, and confessed with a whirling brain, and almost unconscious of his utterance, that "they could not hope to see them again in this world."

What ensued must neither be attempted to be described, nor even remembered. It was one of those tragedies of life which enfeeble the most faithful memories at a blow, shatter nerves beyond the faculty of revival, cloud the mind for ever, or turn the hair grey in an instant. They carried Venetia delirious to her bed. The very despair, and almost madness, of her daughter, forced Lady Annabel to self-exertion, of which it was difficult to suppose that even she was capable. And George, too, was obliged to leave them. He stayed only the night. A few words passed between Lady Annabel and himself; she wished the bodies to be embalmed, and borne to England. There was no time to be lost, and there was no one to be entrusted

except George. He had to hasten to Genoa to make all these preparations, and for two days he was absent from the villa. When he returned, Lady Annabel saw him, but Venetia was for a long time invisible. The moment she grew composed, she expressed a wish to her mother instantly to return to Cherbury. All the arrangements necessarily devolved upon George Cadurcis. It was his study that Lady Annabel should be troubled upon no point. The household were discharged, affairs wound up, the felucca hired which was to bear them to Genoa, and in readiness, before he notified to them that the hour of departure had arrived. The most bitter circumstance was looking again upon the sea. It seemed so intolerable to Venetia, that their departure was delayed more than one day in consequence: but it was inevitable; they could reach Genoa in no other manner. George carried Venetia in his arms to the boat, with her face covered with a shawl, and bore her in the same manner to the hotel at Genoa, where their travelling carriage awaited them.

They travelled home rapidly. All seemed to be impelled as it were by a restless desire for repose. Cherbury was the only thought in Venetia's mind. She observed nothing; she made no remark during their journey; they travelled often throughout the night; but no obstacles occurred, no inconveniences. There was one in this miserable society whose only object in life was to support Venetia under her terrible visitation. Silent, but with an eye that never slept, George Cadurcis watched Venetia as a nurse might a child. He

read her thoughts, he anticipated her wishes without inquiring them; every arrangement was unobtrusively made that could possibly consult her comfort.

They passed through London without stopping there. George would not leave them for an instant; nor would he spare a thought to his own affairs, though they urgently required his attention. The change in his position gave him no consolation; he would not allow his passport to be made out with his title; he shuddered at being called Lord Cadurcis; and the only reason that made him hesitate about attending them to Cherbury was its contiguity to his ancestral seat, which he resolved never to visit. There never in the world was a less selfish and more single-hearted man than George Cadurcis. Though the death of his cousin had invested him with one of the most ancient coronets in England, a noble residence, and a fair estate, he would willingly have sacrificed his life to have recalled Plantagenet to existence, and to have secured the happiness of Venetia Herbert.

CHAPTER II.

THE reader must not suppose, from the irresistible emotion that overcame Venetia at the very moment of her return, that she was entirely prostrated by her calamities. On the contrary, her mind had been employed during the whole of her journey to England, in a silent effort to endure her lot with resignation. She had resolved to bear up against her misery with fortitude, and she inherited from her mother sufficient firmness of mind to enable her to achieve her purpose. She came back to Cherbury to live with patience and submission; and though her dreams of happiness might be vanished for ever, to contribute as much as was in her power to the content of that dear and remaining relative who was yet spared to her, and who depended in this world only upon the affection of her child. The return to Cherbury was a pang, and it was over. Venetia struggled to avoid the habits of an invalid; she purposed resuming, as far as was in her power, all the pursuits and duties of her life; and if it were neither possible nor even desirable to forget the past, she dwelt upon it neither to sigh nor to murmur, but to cherish in a sweet and musing mood the ties and affections round which all her feelings had once gathered with so much enjoyment and so much hope.

She rose, therefore, on the morning after her return to Cherbury, at least serene; and she took an early opportunity, when George and her mother were engaged, and absent from the terrace-room, to go forth alone and wander amid her old haunts. There was not a spot about the park and gardens, which had been favourite resorts of herself and Plantagenet in their childhood, that she did not visit. They were unchanged; as green, and bright, and still, as in old days, but what was she? The freshness, and brilliancy, and careless happiness of her life, were fled for ever. And here he lived, and here he roamed, and here his voice sounded, now in glee, now in melancholy, now in wild and fanciful amusement, and now pouring into her bosom all his domestic sorrows. It was but ten years since he first arrived at Cherbury, and who could have anticipated that that little, silent, reserved boy should, ere ten years had passed, have filled a wide and lofty space in the world's thought: that his existence should have influenced the mind of nations, and his death eclipsed their gaiety! His death! Terrible and disheartening thought! Plantagenet was no more. But he had not died without a record. His memory was embalmed in immortal verse, and he had breathed his passion to his Venetia in language that lingered in the ear, and would dwell for ever on the lips, of his fellow men.

Among these woods, too, had Venetia first mused over her father; before her rose those mysterious chambers, whose secret she had penetrated at the risk of her

life. There were no secrets now. Was she happier? Now she felt that even in her early mystery there was delight, and that hope was veiled beneath its ominous shadow. There was now no future to ponder over; her hope was gone, and memory alone remained. All the dreams of those musing hours of her hidden reveries had been realised. She had seen that father, that surpassing parent, who had satisfied alike her heart and her imagination; she had been clasped to his bosom; she had lived to witness even her mother yield to his penitent embrace. And he too was gone; she could never meet him again in this world — in this world in which they had experienced such exquisite bliss! And now she was once more at Cherbury! Oh! give her back her girlhood, with all its painful mystery and harassing doubt! Give her again a future!

She returned to the hall; she met George on the terrace, she welcomed him with a sweet, yet mournful smile. "I have been very selfish," she said, "for I have been walking alone. I mean to introduce you to Cherbury, but I could not resist visiting some old spots." Her voice faltered in these last words. They re-entered the terrace-room together, and joined her mother.

"Nothing is changed, mamma," said Venetia, in a more cheerful tone. "It is pleasant to find something that is the same."

Several days passed, and Lord Cadurcis evinced no desire to visit his inheritance. Yet Lady Annabel was anxious that he should do so, and had more than once

impressed upon him the propriety. Even Venetia at length said to him, "It is very selfish in us keeping you here, George. Your presence is a great consolation, and yet — yet, ought you not to visit your home?" She avoided the name of Cadurcis.

"I ought, dear Venetia," said George, "and I will. I have promised Lady Annabel twenty times, but I feel a terrible disinclination. To-morrow, perhaps."

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," murmured Venetia to herself, "I scarcely comprehend now what to-morrow means." And then again addressing him, and with more liveliness, she said, "We have only one friend in the world now, George, and I think that we ought to be very grateful that he is our neighbour."

"It is a consolation to me," said Lord Cadurcis, "for I cannot remain here, and otherwise I should scarcely know how to depart."

"I wish you would visit your home, if only for one morning," said Venetia; "if only to know how very near you are to us."

"I dread going alone," said Lord Cadurcis. "I cannot ask Lady Annabel to accompany me, because —" He hesitated.

"Because?" inquired Venetia.

"I cannot ask or wish her to leave you."

"You are always thinking of me, dear George," said Venetia, artlessly. "I assure you, I have come back to Cherbury to be happy. I must visit your home some day, and I hope I shall visit it often. We will all go — soon," she added.

"Then I will postpone my visit to that day," said George. "I am in no humour for business, which I know awaits me there. Let me enjoy a little more repose at dear Cherbury."

"I have become very restless of late, I think," said Venetia, "but there is a particular spot in the garden that I wish to see. Come with me, George."

Lord Cadurcis was only too happy to attend her. They proceeded through a winding walk in the shrubberies, until they arrived at a small and open plot of turf, where Venetia stopped. "There are some associations," she said, "of this spot connected with both those friends that we have lost. I have a fancy that it should be in some visible manner consecrated to their memories. On this spot, George, Plantagenet once spoke to me of my father. I should like to raise their busts here; and indeed it is a fit place for such a purpose; for poets," she added, faintly smiling, "should be surrounded with laurels."

"I have some thoughts on this head that I am revolving in my fancy myself," said Lord Cadurcis, "but I will not speak of them now."

"Yes, now, George; for indeed it is a satisfaction for me to speak of them, at least with you, with one who understood them so well, and loved them scarcely less than I did."

George tenderly put his arm into hers and led her away. As they walked along, he explained to her his plans, which yet were somewhat crude, but which

greatly interested her; but they were roused from their conversation by the bell of the hall sounding, as if to summon them, and therefore they directed their way immediately to the terrace. A servant running met them; he brought a message from Lady Annabel. Their friend the Bishop of **** had arrived.

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, my little daughter," said the good Masham, advancing as Venetia entered the room, and tenderly embracing her. The kind-hearted old man maintained a conversation on indifferent subjects with animation for some minutes; and thus a meeting, the anticipation of which would have cost Venetia hours of pain and anxiety, occurred with less uneasy feelings.

Masham had hastened to Cherbury the moment he heard of the return of the Herberts to England. He did not come to console, but to enliven. He was well aware that even his eloquence, and all the influence of his piety, could not soften the irreparable past; and knowing, from experience, how in solitude the unhappy brood over sorrow, he fancied that his arrival, and perhaps his arrival only, might tend in some degree at this moment to their alleviation and comfort. He brought Lady Annabel and Venetia letters from their relations, with whom he had been staying, at their country residence, and who were anxious that their unhappy kinsfolk should find change of scene under their roof.

"They are very affectionate," said Lady Annabel, "but I rather think that neither Venetia nor myself feel inclined to quit Cherbury at present."

"Indeed, not, mamma," said Venetia. "I hope we shall never leave home again."

"You must come and see me some day," said the Bishop; then turning to George, whom he was glad to find here, he addressed him in a hearty tone, and expressed his delight at again meeting him.

Insensibly to all parties this arrival of the good Masham exercised a beneficial influence on their spirits. They could sympathise with his cheerfulness, because they were convinced that he sympathised with their sorrow. His interesting conversation withdrew their minds from the painful subject on which they were always musing. It seemed profanation to either of the three mourners when they were together alone, to indulge in any topic but the absorbing one, and their utmost effort was to speak of the past with composure: but they all felt relieved, though at first unconsciously, when one, whose interest in their feelings could not be doubted, gave the signal of withdrawing their reflections from vicissitudes which it was useless to deplore. Even the social forms which the presence of a guest rendered indispensable, and the exercise of the courtesies of hospitality, contributed to this result. They withdrew their minds from the past. And the worthy bishop, whose tact was as eminent as his good humour and benevolence, evincing as much delicacy of feeling as cheerfulness of temper, a very few days had elapsed before each of his companions was aware that his presence had contributed to their increased content.

"You have not been to the abbey yet, Lord Cadurcis," said Masham to him one day, as they were

sitting together after dinner, the ladies having retired. "You should go."

"I have been unwilling to leave them," said George, "and I could scarcely expect them to accompany me. It is a visit that must revive painful recollections."

"We must not dwell on the past," said Masham, "we must think only of the future."

"Venetia has no future, I fear," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Why not?" said Masham, "she is yet a girl, and with a prospect of a long life. She must have a future, and I hope and I believe it will yet be a happy one."

"Alas!" said Lord Cadurcis, "no one can form an idea of the attachment that subsisted between Plantagenet and Venetia. They were not common feelings, or the feelings of common minds, my dear Lord."

"No one knew them both better than I did," said Masham, "not even yourself: they were my children."

"I feel that," said George, "and therefore it is a pleasure to us all to see you, and to speak with you."

"But we must look for consolation," said Masham; "to deplore is fruitless. If we live, we must struggle to live happily. To tell you the truth, though their immediate return to Cherbury was inevitable, and their residence here for a time is scarcely to be deprecated, I still hope they will not bury themselves here. For my part, after the necessary interval, I wish to see Venetia once more in the world."

Lord Cadurcis looked very mournful, and shook his head.

"As for her dear mother, she is habituated to sorrow

and disappointment," said Masham. "So long as Venetia lives Lady Annabel will be content. Besides, deplorable as may be the past, there must be solace to her in the reflection that she was reconciled to her husband before his death, and contributed to his happiness. Venetia is the stricken lamb, but Venetia is formed for happiness, and it is in the nature of things that she will be happy. We must not, however, yield unnecessarily to our feelings. A violent exertion would be unwise, but we should habituate ourselves gradually to the exercise of our duties, and to our accustomed pursuits. It would be well for you to go Cadurcis. If I were you I would go to-morrow. Take advantage of my presence; and return and give a report of your visit. Habituate Venetia to talk of a spot with which ultimately she must renew her intimacy."

Influenced by this advice, Lord Cadurcis rose early on the next morning and repaired to the seat of his fathers; where hitherto his foot had never trod. When the circle at Cherbury assembled at their breakfast table he was missing, and Masham had undertaken the office of apprising his friends of the cause of his absence. He returned to dinner, and the conversation fell naturally upon the Abbey and the impressions he had received. It was maintained at first by Lady Annabel and the Bishop, but Venetia ultimately joined in it, and with cheerfulness. Many a trait and incident of former days was alluded to; they talked of Mrs. Cadurcis, whom George had never seen; they settled the chambers he should inhabit; they mentioned the im-

provements which Plantagenet had once contemplated, and which George must now accomplish.

"You must go to London first," said the Bishop; "you have a great deal to do, and you should not delay such business. I think you had better return with me. At this time of the year you need not be long absent; you will not be detained; and when you return, you will find yourself much more at ease; for, after all, nothing is more harassing than the feeling, that there is business which must be attended to, and which, nevertheless, is neglected."

Both Lady Annabel and Venetia enforced this advice of their friend; and so it happened that ere a week had elapsed Lord Cadurcis, accompanying Masham, found himself once more in London.

CHAPTER IV.

VENETIA was now once more alone with her mother; it was as in old times. Their life was the same as before the visit of Plantagenet previous to his going to Cambridge, except indeed that they had no longer a friend at Marringhurst. They missed the Sabbath visits of that good man; for though his successor performed the duties of the day, which had been a condition when he was presented to the living, the friend who knew all the secrets of their hearts was absent. Venetia continued to bear herself with great equanimity, and the anxiety which she observed instantly impressed on her mother's countenance, the moment she fancied there was unusual gloom on the brow of her child, impelled Venetia doubly to exert herself to appear resigned. And in truth, when Lady Annabel revolved in her mind the mournful past, and meditated over her early and unceasing efforts to secure the happiness of her daughter, and then contrasted her aspirations with the result, she could not acquit herself of having been too often unconsciously instrumental in forwarding a very different conclusion from that for which she had laboured. This conviction preyed upon the mother, and the slightest evidence of reaction in Venetia's tranquillised demeanour occasioned her the utmost remorse and grief. The absence of George made both Lady Annabel and Venetia still more finely appreciate the solace of his society.

Left to themselves, they felt how much they had depended on his vigilant and considerate attention, and how much his sweet temper and his unfailing sympathy had contributed to their consolation. He wrote, however, to Venetia by every post, and his letters, if possible, endeared him still more to their hearts. Unwilling to dwell upon their mutual sorrows, yet always expressing sufficient to prove that distance and absence had not impaired his sympathy, he contrived with infinite delicacy even to amuse their solitude with the adventures of his life of bustle. The arrival of the post was the incident of the day; and not merely letters arrived, — one day brought books, another music; continually some fresh token of his thought and affection reached them. He was, however, only a fortnight absent; but when he returned, it was to Cadurcis. He called upon them the next day; and indeed every morning found him at Cherbury: but he returned to his home at night, and so, without an effort, from their guest he had become their neighbour.

Plantagenet had left the whole of his property to his cousin: his mother's fortune, which, as an accessory fund, was not inconsiderable, besides the estate. And George intended to devote a portion of this to the abbey. Venetia was to be his counsellor in this operation, and therefore there were ample sources of amusement for the remainder of the year. On a high ridge, which was one of the beacons of the county, and which moreover marked the junction of the domains of Cherbury and Cadurcis, it was his intention to raise a

monument to the united memories of Marmion Herbert and Plantagenet Lord Cadurcis. He brought down a design with him from London; and this was the project which he had previously whispered to Venetia. With George for her companion, too, Venetia was induced to resume her rides. It was her part to make him acquainted with the county in which he was so important a resident. Time, therefore, at Cherbury on the whole flowed on in a tide of tranquil pleasure, and Lady Annabel observed with interest and fondness the continual presence beneath her roof of one who, from the first day she had met him, had engaged her kind feelings, and had since become intimately endeared to her.

The end of November was, however, now approaching, and Parliament was about to reassemble. Masham had written more than once to Lord Cadurcis, impressing upon him the propriety and expediency of taking his seat. He had shown these letters, as he showed everything, to Venetia, who was his counsellor on all subjects, and Venetia agreed with their friend.

"It is right," said Venetia; "you have a duty to perform, and you must perform it. Besides, I do not wish the name of Cadurcis to sink again into obscurity. I shall look forward with interest to Lord Cadurcis taking the oaths and his seat. It will please me; it will indeed."

"But Venetia," said George, "I do not like to leave this place. I am happy, if we may be happy. This life suits me. I am a quiet man. I dislike London. I feel alone there."

"You can write to us; you will have a great deal to say. And I shall have something to say to you now. I must give you a continual report how they go on at the abbey. I will be your steward, and superintend everything."

"Ah!" said George, "what shall I do in London without you — without your advice? There will be something occurring every day, and I shall have no one to consult. Indeed I shall feel quite miserable; I shall indeed."

"It is quite impossible that, with your station, and at your time of life, you should bury yourself in the country," said Venetia. "You have the whole world before you, and you must enjoy it. It is very well for mamma and myself to lead this life. I look upon ourselves as two nuns. If Cadurcis is an abbey, Cherbury is now a convent."

"How can a man wish to be more than happy? I am quite content here," said George. "What is London to me?"

"It may be a great deal to you, more than you think," said Venetia. "A great deal awaits you yet. However, there can be no doubt you should take your seat. You can always return if you wish. But take your seat, and cultivate dear Masham. I have the utmost confidence in his wisdom and goodness. You cannot have a friend more respectable. Now mind my advice, George."

"I always do, Venetia."

CHAPTER V.

Time and Faith are the great consolers; and neither of these precious sources of solace were wanting to the inhabitants of Cherbury. They were again living alone, but their lives were cheerful; and if Venetia no longer indulged in a worldly and blissful future, nevertheless, in the society of her mother, in the resources of art and literature, in the diligent discharge of her duties to her humble neighbours, and in cherishing the memory of the departed, she experienced a life that was not without its tranquil pleasures. She maintained with Lord Cadurcis a constant correspondence; he wrote to her every day, and although they were separated, there was not an incident of his life, and scarcely a thought, of which she was not cognizant. It was with great difficulty that George could induce himself to remain in London; but Masham, who soon obtained over him all the influence which Venetia desired, ever opposed his return to the abbey. The good Bishop was not unaware of the feelings with which Lord Cadurcis looked back to the Hall of Cherbury, and himself of a glad and sanguine temperament, he indulged in a belief in the consummation of all that happiness for which his young friend, rather sceptically, sighed. But Masham was aware that time could alone soften the bitterness of Venetia's sorrow, and prepare her for that change of

life which he felt confident would alone ensure the happiness both of herself and her mother. He therefore detained Lord Cadurcis in London the whole of the session, so that on his return to Cherbury, his society might be esteemed a novel and agreeable incident in the existence of its inhabitants, and not be associated merely with their calamities.

It was therefore about a year after the catastrophe which had so suddenly changed the whole tenor of their lives, and occasioned so unexpected a revolution in his own position, that Lord Cadurcis arrived at his ancestral seat, with no intention of again speedily leaving it. He had long and frequently apprised his friends of his approaching presence, and arriving at the abbey late at night, he was at Cherbury early on the following morning.

Although no inconsiderable interval had elapsed since Lord Cadurcis had parted from the Herberts, the continual correspondence that had been maintained between himself and Venetia, divested his visit of the slightest embarrassment. They met as if they had parted yesterday, except perhaps with greater fondness. The chain of their feelings was unbroken. He was indeed welcomed, both by Lady Annabel and her daughter, with warm affection; and his absence had only rendered him dearer to them by affording an opportunity of feeling how much his society contributed to their felicity. Venetia was anxious to know his opinion of the improvements at the abbey, which she had superintended; but he assured her that he would

examine nothing without her company, and ultimately they agreed to walk over to Cadurcis.

It was a summer day, and they walked through that very wood wherein we described the journey of the child Venetia, at the commencement of this very history. The blue patches of wild hyacinths had all disappeared, but there were flowers as sweet. What if the first feelings of our heart fade, like the first flowers of spring, succeeding years, like the coming summer, may bring emotions not less charming, and, perchance, far more fervent!

"I can scarcely believe," said Lord Cadurcis, "that I am once more with you. I know not what surprises me most, Venetia, that we should be walking once more together in the woods of Cherbury, or that I ever should have dared to quit them."

"And yet it was better, dear George," said Venetia. "You must now rejoice that you have fulfilled your duty, and yet you are here again. Besides, the abbey never would have been finished if you had remained. To complete all our plans, it required a mistress."

"I wish it always had one," said George. "Ah! Venetia, once you told me never to despair."

"And what have you to despair about, George?"

"Heigh ho!" said Lord Cadurcis, "I never shall be able to live in this abbey alone."

"You should have brought a wife from London," said Venetia.

"I told you once, Venetia, that I was not a marry-

ing man," said Lord Cadurcis; "and certainly I never shall bring a wife from London."

"Then you cannot accustom yourself too soon to a bachelor's life," said Venetia.

"Ah! Venetia," said George, "I wish I were clever; I wish I were a genius; I wish I were a great man."

"Why, George?"

"Because, Venetia, perhaps," and Lord Cadurcis hesitated, "perhaps you would think differently of me? I mean perhaps your feelings towards me might — ah! Venetia, perhaps you might think me worthy of you — perhaps you might love me."

"I am sure, dear George, if I did not love you, I should be the most ungrateful of beings: you are our only friend."

"And can I never be more than a friend to you, Venetia?" said Lord Cadurcis, blushing very deeply.

"I am sure, dear George, I should be very sorry for your sake, if you wished to be more," said Venetia.

"Why?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"Because I should not like to see you unite your destiny with that of a very unfortunate, if not a very unhappy person."

"The sweetest, the loveliest of women!" said Lord Cadurcis. "O! Venetia, I dare not express what I feel, still less what I could hope. I think so little of myself, so highly of you, that I am convinced my aspirations are too arrogant for me to breathe them."

"Ah! dear George, you deserve to be happy," said

Venetia. "Would that it were in my power to make you!"

"Dearest Venetia, it is, it is," exclaimed Lord Cadurcis: then checking himself, as if frightened by his boldness, he added in a more subdued tone, "I feel I am not worthy of you."

They stood upon the breezy down that divided the demesnes of Cherbury and the Abbey. Beneath them rose, "embosomed in a valley of green bowers," the ancient pile lately renovated under the studious care of Venetia.

"Ah!" said Lord Cadurcis, "be not less kind to the master of these towers, than to the roof that you have fostered. You have renovated our halls — restore our happiness! There is an union that will bring consolation to more than one hearth, and baffle all the crosses of adverse fate. Venetia, beautiful and noble-minded Venetia, condescend to fulfil it!"

Perhaps the reader will not be surprised that within a very few months of this morning walk, the hands of George, Lord Cadurcis, and Venetia Herbert were joined in the chapel at Cherbury by the good Masham. Peace be with them!

THE END.

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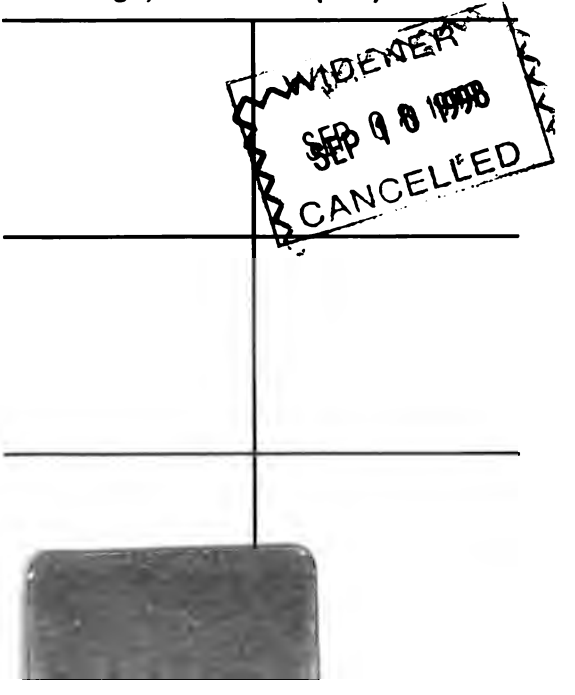
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